THE
Poor Doubting CHRISTIAN
Drawn to CHRIST.

Wherein the main Lets and Hinderances, which keepe men from coming to Christ, are discovered.

With speciall Helps to recover Gods favour.

By THO. HOOKER.

Isa. 55. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, drink of the waters of life; and he that hath no money, come, buy, and eat freely.*

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THE Poor Doubting Christian drawn unto Christ.

Joh. 6. 45.

Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.

THere are divers lets and impediments which hinder poor Christians from coming unto Christ; all which I desire to reduce to these following Heads.

First, such hinderances as really keep men from coming to take hold 1.

of Christ at all; which are briefly these,

Lets which hinder men from coming to Christ.

1. Blinde careleſſ neſs or preſumptuous Security, whereby men content themſelves with their preſent condition, preſuming all is well with them, when there is no ſuch matter.

2. Being convinced of this, they bethink how to ſave themſelves by their owne ſtrength, and thereupon ſet upon a reformation of life, thinking to make God amends by reforming ſome ſinnes which they heare themſelves reproved of by the Miniſters.

3. The ſinner being convinced of his utter inability to pleaſe God in himſelfe, at length gets up a ſtaire higher, and ſees all his performances, and prayers, and duties to bee of no power in themſelves, but that hee muſt leave all, and cleave onely unto Chriſt by faith; and this he thinks he can doe well enough, and ſo truſts himſelfe upon Chriſt, thinking all the work is then done, and no more to be looked after.

4. If hee ſees this failes him too, then hee goes yet further, and confeſſeth hee cannot come to Chriſt, except Chriſt give him his hand, and helpe him up; therefore now he will attend upon the Ordinances, and labour and beſtir himſelfe hard in the uſe of all good meanes, conceiving thereby to hammer out at laſt a *faith* of his own to make him happy. And here he reſts, hanging as it were upon the outſide of the Ark ſo long, til at laſt the waves and windes growing fierce and violent, he is beaten off, and ſo ſinks for ever.

II. Beſides theſe, there are other kinds of hinderances which do not indeed deprive a man of title and intereſt to eternall happineſſe, but make the way tedious and uncomfortable, ſo that hee cannot come to Chriſt ſo readily as he deſires and longs to do; the ground whereof is this: When men, out of carnall reaſon, contrive another way to come unto Chriſt then ever hee ordained or revealed; when we *ſet up our ſtandards by Gods Standard*, or *our threſholds by his*,

Ezek. 43.8. and out of our own imagination, make another ſtate of believing then ever Chriſt required or ordained. No marvel that we come ſhort of him: For thus we put rubs, and make bars in our way: wee manacle our hands, and fetter our feet, and then ſay, that wee cannot take, nor go: Thus it is with you poore Chriſtians, and the fault is your own.

Three main hinderances which keep men from Chriſt.

But, amongſt many, there bee three Hinderances which are chiefly to be obſerved, by which many graciout hearts are marvellouſly hindered from coming to, and from receiving that comfort from Chriſt which they might, and he is willing to impart unto them.

1.] First, the diſtreſſed ſoule, being (haply) truly humbled, takes notice of the beauty of holineſſe, and the Image of God ſtampt upon the hearts of his children, and of all thoſe precious promiſes which God hath made to all that are his; now the ſoul ſeeing theſe, begins thus to reaſon with it ſelfe, and ſaith; Surely if I were ſo holy and ſo gracious, then

then I might have hope to receive the pardon of my ſinnes: or were my heart ſo enlarged to duties and could my heart bee ſo carryed with power againſt my corruptions, to maſter them, then there were ſome hope: But when I have no power againſt ſinne, nor any heart to ſeek ſo importunately for a Chriſt, how dare I think that any mercy belongs to me, having ſo many wants? Thus they dare not come to the promiſe; and they will not venture upon it, becauſe they have not the enlargement to duties, & that power againſt corruption which ſometimes the Saints of God have.

But wee muſt know, this doth not hinder; and that wee make that a hinderance, which, in truth, is none. For (obſerve it) wee muſt not think to bring our enlargements and hope to the promiſe, but go to the promiſe for them: Hope muſt bee ſtirred, and Deſire quickned, and Love and Joy kindled by the promiſe. But who made this condition of the *Covenant*, That a man muſt have ſo much

much of enlargement, before hee can come to the promiſe? Our Saviour being our husband, requires no portion with us, nor ever lookt after any: All that he looks for, is meer poverty and emptineſſe. If thou hast nothing, yet hee will have thee with thy nothing; provided that thou wilt have him. Therefore it is thus written; *The rich he ſends empty away*; but the poore hee ſatisfies, and the thirſty hee refreſhes with good; and ſo, as that there is nothing, required on our ſide, but to receive him as a Husband: For, *Buy without money*, is the Text. You muſt not come and think to buy a Husband: the Lord looks for no power or ſufficiency from you, of your ſelves; nor of your ſelves any power againſt corruption, or enlargement to duties: If you will be content that Chriſt ſhall take all from you, and diſpoſe of you and all; then, take a Saviour, and then you have him.

But the poor ſoule ſaith, *If I go thus hoodwink'd, how ſhall I know that I doe not preſume; and how ſhall I know*

know that I have a true title to the Promise?

I answer: There is no better argument in the world to prove that thou hast an interest in Christ, then this, which is thy taking of the Lord Christ as a Saviour wholly, and as an Husband only, *John* 1. 12. *As many as received him, to them hee gave power to bee the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* He doth not say, To as many as had such enlargement to duties, and such power against corruption; but if thou wilt take Christ upon those termes which he offers himselfe, there is no better argument under heaven then that, to prove that thou hast a title to the promise. Indeed, there is a desperate despair that often seizeth upon the hearts of distressed sinners. *Answ.*

2. Therefore in the second place, as the sinner looks upon the excellency of Christ, and of grace, and upon his own insufficiency withall, which makes him that hee will not venture upon the promise; so hee looks too altogether upon his owne sinfulnesse

and worthinesse, and therefore dare not venture upon it; he views the number of his sins so many and vile, and the countenance of them so long, and durable; and hee seeth the floods of abominations coming in so amaine upon his soule, and Satan to boot, (who helps him forward in all this,) therefore he dares not make out unto Christ. But this is the policy of the Devil, who (if he can) will make a man to see sinne thorow his owne Spectacles, or not to see it at all; and then to say, There is mercy enough in a Saviour, and therefore I may live as I list. But when the sinner will needs see his sinne, then he will let him see nothing but sin; and this, to the end that hee may despaire for ever.

Now here the poore sinner is at a stand, and can go no further; for tell him of the mercy of God, and of the plenteous redemption in Christ, and of the riches of the freenesse of Gods grace: What (saith he) should I think that there is any mercy for me, and that I have any interest in Christ? that

that were strange. And thus the soule is alwayes poring, and alwayes too much fastened and setled upon his corruption, ever stirring the sore, without ever going to the Physitian. Where note, that a man is as well kept from looking to Christ by despair, as by presumption. Before hee sees his sin, he thinks his condition is good, and that he hath a sufficiency of his own, and needs not go to Christ; and when hee sees his sin, then hee beholds so much vilenes in himselfe, and in it, that he dares not go to Christ, lest when he comes before him, he send him down to that ever-burning lake of fire and brimstone. Herein the Devil is very subtile; but this doth not hinder our title to Christ, neither ought it to discourage us from laying hold on salvation.

1. For <u>first</u>, (observe it,) For whom did Christ come into the world, and for whom did hee dye when hee was come? Was it for the *righteous*? such needed him not: It was for the *poor sinner* that judges himselfe, that con-

condemns himselfe, and see that hee cannot save himselfe. *Paul* saith, *Christ*
1 Tim. 1. 15. *Jesus came into the World to save sinners, of whom I am the chiefe:* and *Zech.* 13. 1. *There is a fountain opened for sinne, and for uncleanesse*; that is, for all sorts of sins, and kinde of sinners: bee their iniquities never so great, and never so vile, there is a Fountain set open for them; come who will. There was never any saved that was not a Rebel first; nor any received to mercy, that first opposed not the mercies of God, and his grace in Christ. The fiery Serpent did sting the people in the wilderneſse; first then they were stung, and being stung, there was a brazen Serpent to heal them. But,

2. Observe the folly of this plea; what Scripture ever said, that the greatneſse of mans sinne could hinder the greatneſse of Gods mercy? no
Psal. 25. 11. Scripture saith so; wee see *David* prayeth to the contrary, *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and pardon my sinnes, for they are great*: Nay, God himself doth the quite contrary, *Isai.*

43.

43. 24, 25. *Thou haſt made me ſerve with thy ſinnes, and wearied me with thine iniquities, yet I am hee that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for my Names ſake.* When the Jews did tire God with their diſtempered manners, and burthened him with their ſinfull courſes, then the Lord for his owne Name ſake would not ſo much as remember their iniquities againſt them.

3. Againe obſerve, That ſins, though they bee never ſo hainous of themſelves, yet if the ſoule can ſee them, and the heart bee burdened with them, they are ſo farre from hindering the work of faith, and from making thee uncapable of mercy, that they fit thee the rather to go to Chriſt The truth is (which I pray you take notice of,) it is not properly our unworthineſſe, but our pride and haughtineſſe that hinders us from comming to Chriſt; for wee would have ſomething from our ſelves, and not all from him. But to the diſtreſſed ſoul, that ſees the vileneſſe of his ſinnes; I ſay, Suppoſe thy ſins were

fewer,

fewer; yet upon such a Suppose, thou wouldst not go to Christ, as perswaded of the freeness of his grace; but because thy sins are not many, and upon conceit that thou haste a worthinesse in thy selfe, and wouldst bring something to Christ, and not receive all from him; therefore thou keepest back. And is it not plaine (then) that it is thy pride, and thy self-conceitednesse that hinders thee? Thou must have thus much grace and holinesse; and Christ must not justifie the ungodly, but the godly man. But I tell thee, that, upon such terms, hee will never justifie thee or any man while the world stands.

Object. But the soule replies again; *My sins are worse then so, not onely because they are many, but because of the mercy and salvacion that I have rejected, and which hath been offered me from day to day.*

Answ. But I answer: This cannot hurt thee, provided that thou ca st see those evils of thine: For then, though thou hast cast away the kind-

kindneſſe of the Lord, yet the Lord will not caſt thee away, if thou wilt come and ſeek him earneſtly again and againe: *For the iniqnity of his covetouſneſſe I was wrath* (ſaith God) *and I ſmote him; I hid my ſelfe, and he went on forwardly in the way of his own heart.* If this could have hindred, *Judah* ſhould never have received mercy; but the Text ſaith, I have ſeen his wayes, and will heale him; *Thou haſt played the harlot with many lovers, yet turn again to me, ſaith the Lord.* So then, there is no time paſt, if a man have but a heart to return. There is no limitation of the riches of Gods free grace, except the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt; therefore ſaith Chriſt, *Rev.* 3. 20. *I ſtand at the doore and knock:* Though hee cry till he be hoarſe, and ſtand till hee be weary, yet hee ſtands ſtill: if any adulterous or deceitful wretch will open, the Lord will come in, and bring ſtore of comfort to him, and ſup with him.

Iſai. 57. 17. 18.

Ier. 3. 1.

Oh, all that is true, ſaith the poor ſoul, had I but a heart to mourn for my

Object.

my baseneſſe. See my ſinnes I doe, but this is my miſery, I cannot be burdened with them; I have a heart that cannot break and mourn for dishonoring of God, and offending him ſo many ways. But I ſay,

Anſw. This hurts not neither; provided that thy heart be weary of it ſelfe, be-
Mich. 7. 18 cauſe it cannot be weary of ſin. *The Lord ſheweth mercy, beauſe he wil ſhew mercy*: It is not becauſe thou canſt pleaſe him, but becauſe mercy pleaſeth him. When did the Lord ſhew mercy to *Paul*? I ſay, When? but even when *Paul* did expreſſe moſt malice againſt him? *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* Hee perſecutes Chriſt, and yet Chriſt pitties him, and
Act. 16. ſhewes him mercy: and ſo the churliſh *Jaylor*, when hee was moſt oppoſite againſt the meanes of grace, the Lord even then ſhewed moſt compaſſion upon him. Hee that (before) reſiſted the meanes of grace, was now brought home by thoſe meanes that before he reſiſted.

Object. But woe to mee (ſaith the poore ſoule) you are now come to the quick:

quick: this very word is like a Milſtone about my neck, and I in the Sea, ready to bee ſunk for ever. This is the depth of that baſeneſs that lies on me, even this, That all the meanes can doe no better upon me. Why? what though *Paul* and the Jaylor were bad enough, ſo bad as you ſay? Yet they were made better by the meanes: but this is my hopeleſſe condition, That the meanes of grace prevail nothing on me. Oh, is there ſuch a heart in hell as I have? for how bad muſt it needs bee, when all the meanes in the world can doe it no more good! and now me-thinkes I feel my heart more hard and inexorable under all Gods Ordinances, then when at firſt I believed. My condition therefore is (moſt certainly) hopeleſs, ſeeing the means that ſhould ſoften me, doe but harden me, and make me worſe.

This is the laſt plea whereby the Devill keepes in, and poſſeſſeth the heart of a poor heartleſſe ſinner. But let me anſwer the; and for anſwer I ſay: This hurts not neither: for here *Anſw.*

here at leaſt thou maiſt have hope of mercy? And here obſerve theſe three things by way of anſwer; and know that.

1. Firſt, the Word and meanes of grace doe work good; if they make thee more ſenſible of thy hardneſſe and deadneſſe, though haply they work not that good, and after that manner that thou deſireſt; yet if they make thee to ſee thy baſeneſſe, thy hardneſſe of heart, and dulneſſe of ſpirit, in regard of that body of death which hangs upon thee, then the Word and They worke in the beſt manner; becauſe it is after Gods manner, howſoever not after thine. That Phyſick workes moſt kindly, that makes the party ſick before it works: ſo it is with the Word: before, thou hadſt a proud heart, and didſt therefore lift up thy ſelfe in thine own abilities, and didſt truſt in thine owne ſtrength, and thou thoughtſt that thy care and the improvement of the meanes, would work wonders: But now the Word works ſweetly, when it makes thee ap-

apprehenſive, that a wounded ſoul is the gift of God, not of man, nor of the meanes; when it make thee look up to God for it, and to prize it when thou haſt it; and to wait upon God with thy daily prayers, ſtill to continue it ſo. To feel deadneſſe, is life; and to feel hardneſs, is ſoftneſs; onely remember this one Caution; Except there be ſome luſt or diſtemper that thy heart hankers after; (for then the word will harden thee, becauſe thou hardeneſt thy ſelfe) that one I ſay excepted, thou art in a good way.

2. Secondly, (mark this, I beſeech you) Thou art the cauſe why thy heart is not ſoftned, and why the Word works not upon thy ſoul: the diſtemper of thine own heart, hinders the working of the Word, and diſpenſation of Gods providence; and the tenour of the Covenant of Grace. Thou thinkeſt to limite the holy One of *Iſrael*; but that may not be: for, his Covenant is a Covenant of Grace; and the Lord (woh is free) will not ſtand bent to thy bow, or give 2.

give thee grace when thou wilt; for, *it is not for* us *to know the times and seasons.* What if the Lord will not give thee grace this year, nor the next, nor all thy life? if at the last gasp hee will drop in a little of his favour, it is more then he owes thee. Therefore hear to day, and wait to morrow and continue in so doing because thou knowest not when God may bless his own Ordinance. Complaine not of delayes, but wait, for God hath waited for you long; and therefore if he make you wait for peace of conscience, and assurance of his love, hee deales but equally with you, and as shall bee best with you. God gives what, and when, and how hee will, therefore wait for it.

Wait for mercy.

3. Thirdly, Know and consider, that thou hast rested upon thine owne duties and endeavours, and so doest not goe to God, that blessed both the meanes, and all the endeavours of his this way. The fault therefore is thine own. (I say) thine own, because thou rested in thine owne performances, and in the power of the meanes

Rest not upon duties

meanes that thou apprehendeſt, and doeſt not go to God, that would have wrought more then all they can: for, did a man depend upon Gods power and mercy in his Ordinances, hee ſhould alwayes finde ſome proportionable ſuccour, as well when hee finds no ſucceſſe, as when hee findes any. God ſometimes gives, and ſometimes delayes to give: but Gods love is as conſtant when he gives not, as when he gives. Therefore labour to quit all carnall confidence in holy duties. Reſt not in thine own performances, but look beyond all duties, to God, and deſire him to give thee the ſucceſſe above them.

Watch how thy ſoule behaves it ſelfe after the naked diſcharge of a duty; all quiet and calm, notwithſtanding hee lives in a daily courſe and practice of ſin; ſo that he prayes and lyes, faſts and cozens, and yet this makes all whole: I tell you, it is an undoubted argument, that the ſoule did place a carnall confidence in his own performances, and as yet ne-

never attained to a Lord Christ in the duty: For he that seeks a Saviour in his duties, and rests not in self-performances, this man brings a Saviour, a Christ into his soul. And mark what follows: Christ brings pardoning vertue and purging vertue with him, and gives him more power against corruptions, and more suspition over his owne soul then ever he had before: so that the soul begins to quarrel with it selfe, and lies downe with shame, and sayes, What shall I think of my praying and hearing? where is the vertue and power of it? Did ever Christ heare my prayers, or come into my soule by his Ordinances? Where is the purging vertue, then, to cleare me of my sinnes? Where is the purifying vertue to cleanse me of my corruptions? This is a ground of a gracious heart, that placeth not any confidence in holy duties, but onely in the Lord Christ.

Do not content your selves in this, that you see a need of a Saviour, because your mindes are enlightned therein, and your reason perswaded there-

thereof, when in the meane time you place a kinde of confidence in the dutie performed and ſervice diſcharged and think thereby to bring Chriſt at your beck, and you in the mean while doe what you pleaſe: this is a wonderful cunning craft of Sathan. This I ſay then; A man may ſee a need of a Saviour; but do not quiet thy ſoule, becauſe thou knoweſt it muſt be ſo, aud becauſe thou findeſt by experience thou canſt not helpe thy ſelfe, the guilt of ſinne ſtill ſticks upon thee, and therefore a Saviour, now muſt helpe thee: I ſay, content not thy ſelfe with the meer notion of it, to ſay, I ſee it ſhould be ſo, and it muſt be ſo, and reſt thy ſelfe contented in the performances of ſervices, and think to bring a Saviour at thy beck, to doe what thou wilt for thy ſoule; this is a ſlight that Satan has pinn'd to thy ſoule. Many think to have a ſoveraign authority over Chriſt, when they have performed duties: ſo that hee does not uſe the meanes to be led to Chriſt, but hee takes up his duties to be commanders

of

of Christ, and that he may dispose of Christ for his owne turn; so that hee makes Christ an abettor of his owne wickednesse, not a subduer of his corruptions. This is a marvellous deceit, when men rest in their owne abilities, and so abuse Christ. And this will appear in these particulars.

First, watch how thy heart is in the performance of duty. Doth thy prayer, and hearing, and performing of services make thee ventrous and fool-hardy to meddle with corruptions? then its a certain ground thou placest carnall confidence in thine owne performances. As for example, If a Professor should say, What if I do now and then sin? and what if I do now and then pilfer, and use false weights and measures? I'l but pray so much the more, and fast so much the oftner: will not my conscience then be be satisfied? It shall be satisfied; I will command it: I will put in bail for my sinne, and pray against it. Now I beseech you observe it; this praying and performing

ing of duties, is meerly to command a Saviour to give allowance to sinne, that so hee may commit freely. As who would say, I have authority over my Saviour, and he shall pardon my sinne, and give me allowance to commit sin. O the wretched villany that is in this man's heart! Fearfull is thy estate, whosoever thou art, that makest thy performances an abettor of thy distempers: so that thou dost thy duties not to convey Christ, that he may helpe thee to prevent sin, but that Christ may take off the venome and indignation of sin, that so thou may'st commit wickednesse without either suspition or further distraction.

Many a man makes his services his Saviours. For, hee makes them the bottome to bear up his Conscience: the ground whereof is this. Haply hee finds and feels by wofull experience, what the fruits of sinne are. Hee sees the venome of his corruptions, and the lamenteble effects of all his sinfull practises. He thought it before a fine thing to swear, and

lye, and drink, and follow base company; but now they are gravel to his heart, and gall to his soul. His conscience fleeth in his face, and hee is readyto sink down to hell under the burden of his misorder'd life. Conscience saith, These bee thy sins, and these will bee thy damnation: they have been thy delight, but they will prove thy shame and confusion in the end; and shortly thou shalt finde the smart of them: To hell therefore, be packing, and gone.

Now this man hath no other cure for his Conscience in such a case, but this; He intreats Conscience to bee quiet. Hee confesseth he hath lived in base courses, and his condition to be very miserable; but now he will reform all. He hath neglected Prayer heretofore, but now he will pray, he hath hated God's servants, but now hee will love them; his wayes have been exceeding evill, but now he will reform them, and now hee will turne over a new leaf. This he saith, and this (he thinks) will serve the turn. And thus many poore soules use the

means

means as *Mediators*, and so fall short of Christ. But a gracious heart doth not onely *pray* and *hear*, and *receive*, and use all possible means to obtaine Christ, but is restlesse and unsatisfied till he enjoy and possesse Christ in the meanes. He rests not upon the bare performance of any duty, neither thinks by vertue of any such his endeavours to get into Christ.

I will expresse this particular more fully in this manner. A rich Usurer that is sick of some disease; tell him such a Physitian can cure him, but he stands upon state, and will not come without a great deale of charge. Charge (saith he) I doe not stand upon that; I have money enough by me, enough to fetch him hither Such a man now placeth all his confidence in his money. So when the soule sees the guilt of sin is not removed, and that *Conscience* is still snarling, and that (the Law condemning him) Christ is the onely Saviour, and he onely that can satisfie and cure all. But now, How shall Christ be procured? Why? His

prayer, and *fasting*, and *performances*, may command so much, and that by the power and merit of the worke done. The voice of a Pharisee, and proper language of a Papist. But what promise is there for it? Within-book none. But thus fools rest on their own performances, and so fall short of Christ and salvation.

Object. *But oh* (saith a poor sinner) *fain would I go out of my selfe. I see too well now that I have rested, and do rest upon duties done; but I cannot deny my selfe as I would.*

Answ. I answer, It is Sathans subtilty to keepe us in our selves, by endeavouring thus to make us go out of our selves. For by our own strengths hee would have us to do it; and perswades us wee may. But this is a marvellous deepnesse of his, wherein hee shewes both malice and cunning in the superlative. For here hee makes us believe (and we out of ignorance are perswaded as hee would have us) that wee have the staffe in our own hands, that is, the power to get out of our selves. But is it so?

Oh

Oh no, it is a ſupernaturall worke to be ſo quit of our ſelves. The ſame hand muſt bring us out of our ſelves, that muſt bring us to Chriſt: and this is *Self-denyal*: and *Self-denyal* is, When the ſoul knoweth it hath nothing, and therefore is ſo over-powred with the mighty hand of God, and the work of his Spirit, that it doth not ſo much as expect any power or ability from it ſelf, or from the creature, in the doing of any good: For it knowes it is dead, and therefore cannot helpe it ſelfe, much leſs can the creature do it any good. It therefore looks up to heaven, and ſeeks all ſufficiency from God alone. For (obſerve it) while I thus think, that I have ability to go out of my ſelfe; do I not then ſay, that I have a principle within me, to deny my ſelfe? But it is not ſo; rather it is quite contrary: for to deny a man's ſelfe, is to know that hee hath no power in himſelfe to do any ſpiritual duty: therefore wee muſt look onely to the voice that calleth us, the voice of Chriſt, and know that hee that

Self denyal what it is.

calls us from the wayes of darkneſſe, and out of our ſelves, muſt and will bring us ont. Therefore expect only power from Chriſt to pluck thee out of thy ſelfe, and to make thee a Believer; for the ſame hand muſt do both, or it will never be.

I would not have a poor creature thinke thus with himſelfe: If this meanes, and theſe Ordinances will do me no good, nor work upon my heart, I ſhall never have comfort: but ſpeak thus unto God, and ſay, In truth, Lord, I expect no power from my ſelfe nor from the meanes; but my reſolution is, to look up to him that hath hid his face yet from his poore ſervant. I will not looke any lower, as here within my ſelf, for any ſuch power: No, Lord, but to the higheſt in power and gifts. Nor will I look to the Miniſter, or to the meanes, but I will wait upon thee (O Lord) and look up to thy power, to worke by thine owne meanes. Remember what *Iſaiah* ſaith: *Who is amongſt you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his ſervants, that walk-*

Iſai. 50. 10

walketh in darkneſſe, and hath no light of comfort, let him truſt in the Name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelfe upon his God. Then when all other things in the world fail, let the ſoule look up to the Lord, and get away from it ſelfe: For then it is the fitteſt time of all to meet with God: I would have a Chriſtian chuſe his time above all times, the fitteſt wherein to meet his Saviour, and to diſappoint Satan: for as I ſaid, it is the laſt refuge that the Devil hath: and if he miſs of this, his force is gone for ever. For otherwiſe the ſinner, partly ſeeing the beauty of grace, will not: and partly ſeeing the baſeneſſe of his owne heart, will not dare to come to Chriſt.

But the next complaint, in the next place, is want of ſenſe and feeling, ſuch as a Chriſtian muſt have, and findes not. Therefore the diſtreſſed ſoule ſaith, *Alas, I never knew what it was to have the aſſurance of Gods love; I never recieved any evidence of Gods favour; and can I (then) think that I have faith? they* *Object.*

that believe, have their hearts filled with joy unspeakable and glorious; the Word saith as much. But I am a stranger to this joy; how then can I thinke that I have any Worke of Faith wrought in me?

Answ: I answer; This doth not hinder, either that thou hast not faith, or that thou may'st not come to God by believing. Only remember these three particulars.

1. First, Thou must not think to have this joy and refreshing before thou goest to the promise; thou must look for it when thou hast chewed and fed upon it: or wouldest thou have the Lord give thee the whole bargain at once and before the match bee made? This *joy* is a fruit that proceeds from *faith* after much wrestling: and doth not presently flow from faith, nor so soon as ever a Christian begins to believe, but after a time; and then the heart is joyous; but never filled with joy before believing. Afterwards, and when a man hath had the sweet dew of the promises dropping upon him: but many

many a day after, let him looke for this joy.

2. Secondly, know that theſe joyes, and this ſenſe and feeling may be abſent from faith. For a man may have a good faith, and yet want the reliſh and ſweetneſſe which he long after. One may want what he deſires and yet want neither life nor heat. A tree may want leaves and fruit, and yet want neither ſap nor moyſture: and a mans faith may be ſomewhat ſtrong, when his feeling is nothing at all. *David* was juſtified and ſanctified, and yet wanted this joy. And *Job* truſted upon God when he had but little feeling; as when he ſaith, *Thou makeſt me a Butt to ſhoot at; yet I will truſt in thee though thou kill me.* Therefore build not your comfort upon ſenſe and feeling, which is to build upon the ſand; but go to the promiſe, as to the rock for it.

But how comes this deſire after Chriſt?

I anſwer: There is no more but two affections in the ſoul God infinitely wiſe having ſo framed it; and

these two are Hope and Desire. The Understanding saves, Such a thing is profitable and comfortable if I had it; then Hope is sent out to wait for that goodnesse: and if it comes not, then desire is sent out to meet that goodnesse: Hope stands and waits for it; but Desire wanders up and down seeking and enquiring after a Lord Jesus, and goes from coast to coast, from East to West; Oh that I could, O that I might, and When shall I? And how may I come to the speech of a Lord Christ? As it was with the Spouse in *Cant.* when her Beloved was gone, she wandered up and down seeking of him, and enquiring of the watchmen if they did not see him her soule loved; so wanders from this thing to that thing, from this place to that place, and never ceaseth to see if she can gain notice of Christ. It goes to Prayer, to see if that will entreat a Christ: it goes to the Word, to see if that will reveal a Christ: it goes to conference, to see if he can hear of Christ there, then it comes to the Congregation, and to the

the Sacrament, to see if it can heare of any newes of a Lord Christ, and of mercy.

The soule thus continues wandring and seeking till at last the Lord Christ comes into the soule. when the soule hath thus hungred & longed for him. At length the Lord Christ is pleased to shew himselfe in view: *Behold, thy King cometh:* so the Lord sayes, *Behold the Lambe of God that takes away* thy sinnes. O thou poore broken hearted sinner, here is thy Saviour; he is come downe from heaven to speak peace to thy soul in the pardon of thy sins. Thou that hungrest for a Christ here hee is, to satisfie thee. thou that thirsteth after Christ, here he is, to refresh thee. Thou that hast long sought him, he saith, Here I am, and all my merits are thine.

Now when the Lord Jesus is pleased to present himselfe to the soule, now Desire hath met with the Lord.

It is in this case with a sinner, as it is with a Traytor who is pursued, and takes a strong Hold, and is there besieged: And now hee seeth no

hope

hope of favour, nor no hope of escape, therefore he is content to submit, and lay his head on the block, that he may receive punishment for his offence: now coming to execution he hears an inkling from the Messenger there is yet hope hee may be pardoned. The poor Traytor in the prison with that is stirred up to hope. Nay then he hears by another Messenger from the King himselfe, If he will come to the Court, and seek unto his Majesty; and importune his Grace for mercy and favour, its like he shall be pardoned. Then he makes haste, and Desire carries him to the Court to sue for favour from the King. So that now he will be listening and enquiring of every one there: Did you hear the King speak nothing of me? How stands the Kings minde towards me? Pray how goes my case? Then some tells him, The truth is, the King hears you are humbled, and that you are sorry for what you have done: at last the King looks out of the window, and sees the malefactor, and sayes, Is this the

Tray-

Traytor? One ſayes, Yes, if it pleaſe your Highneſſe, this is the man, that is humbled and pleads for mercy, and deſires nothing ſo much as favour. Hereupon, The King being full of mercy, tells him, The truth is, his Pardon is a drawing, and comming towards. With that, his heart leaps in his belly, and his heart is enlarged towards his Majeſty, and he ſayes, God bleſſe your Majeſty; never was there ſuch a favourable Prince to ſo poor a Traytor. His heart leapes for joy, becauſe his Pardon is coming towards him. Haply it is not ſealed yet: Now when it is ſealed, and all done, the King calls him in, and delivers it.

So it is with a poor ſinner, he is the malefactor. You that have committed high Treaſon, you think not of it: but take heed, God will purſue you one day. Haply God lets you alone for the preſent, but he will ſurpriſe you on a ſudden, and Conſcience will pluck thee by the throat, and carry thee down to hell. And now the Lord purſues him with a hea-

heavie stroke and indignation, and let fly at his face, and sets Conscience a work as a Pursevant, and that sayes, These are thy sins, and to hell thou must go: God hath sent me to execute thy soul. Now the poor soule sees hee can no way escape from the Lord, and to purchase any favour he sees it impossible; therefore he is resolved to lie down at Gods feet, and hope. Now hope is a faculty of the soul to look out for mercy: as a man that is in expectation of the coming of his friend, goeth to the top of a hill, looks round about him, to see if hee can understand any thing of his friend: so the soul hopes and waits, and stretcheth it self out for mercy. When will it bee, Lord? when will this pardon come? The soul gets up, and stands as it were a tiptoe: O when will it come, Lord?

How does God stir up the heart to hope? Its worth the while to consider how this is maintained.

1. First, the Lord sweetly stayes the heart, and perswades it that his sins are pardonable, & that the good hee wants

wants may bee supplyed; this is a great support to the soule. Hope is alwayes of a good to come. Now when a poor sinner sets his sins, the number of them, the nature of them, the vilenesse of them, the cursednesse of his soul, that he can take no rest; he sees no rest in the creature, nor in himselfe. Though he pray all day, yet he cannot get the pardon of one sin. The soul is out of any expectation of pardon, or power of mercy in any thing he hath or doth: Though all means, all helps, though all men and Angels should joyn together, yet they cannot pardon one sin of his. Now the Lord lifts up his voyce, and says from heaven, Thy sins are pardonable. O the infiniteness of Gods power! though the guilt of sin is powerfull to condemn the soul. But when the infinite power of the Lord is considered, as able to over-power all his sins, this lifteth up the heart in some expectation that the Lord will shew mercy to a man; though it is a hard thing to hope, when the soule is thus troubled: (Can this heart be bro-

broke? can these sins be pardoned? can this soule be saved?) Now comes in the power of God. God can pardon them. Never measure the power of God by that shallow conceit of thine. All things are possible to God, though not to men. And as it is said of *Abraham*, *He hoped above hope*; he looked to the Lord that was able to doe what he had promised: he considered not that hee had a dead body, but that he had a living God to hope on. Justice cannot be so severe to revenge thee, as mercy is gracious to doe good unto thee. If thy sins be never so many, Gods Justice never so great; yet mercy is above all thy sins, above all thy Rebellions. This may support thy soul. So there you have the first ground to stirre up Hope; Thy sins are pardonable. There is more power in God to shew mercy to thee, then power in sinne to destroy thee. The Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to *save that which was lost*; it was the scope of his coming. Now saith the broken and humble sinner, I am lost;

loſt. Did Chriſt come to ſave ſinners? then Chriſt muſt fail of his end, or I of my comfort. God ſays, *Come to me all that are weary and heavy laden.* I am weary: unleſſe the Lord intended good to me, Why did hee invite me, and bid me come? Surely he meanes to ſhew mercy to me.

O take heed of Deſpaire, Queſtion thy eſtate thou mayeſt, thou muſt; but to caſt away all hope, is very hainous in the eyes of the Lord. Caſt away all carnal confidence thou muſt, and yet thou muſt hope. *Let Iſrael hope in the Lord; for in the Lord,* &c. The Lord takes this very ill at our hands, Thou goeſt to the deep dungeon of thy corruption, and there thou ſayeſt theſe ſinnes can never be pardoned: I am ſtill proud, and more ſtubborn: This diſtreſſe God ſeeth not, God ſuccoureth not, his hand cannot reach, his mercy cannot ſave. Now mark what the Prophet ſaith to ſuch a perplexed ſoul, *Iſai.* 40. 27. *Why ſayeſt thou, Thy way is hid from the Lord?* The Lord ſaith, Why ſayeſt thou ſo? *The young man*

ſhall

shall faint and be weary: but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? You wrong God exceedingly: you think its matter of humility, to count your selves so vile. Can God pardon such a wretches sin as mine? Mark that place of the Psalmist, they speak against the Lord, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the wilderness?* They speak not against themselves, but against the Lord. So we speak against God, and charge God himselfe. It is true, says the soul, *Manasseh* was pardoned, *Paul* was converted, Gods Saints have beene received to mercy: But can my sin be pardoned? can my soule be quickned? No, no, my sinnes are greater then can be pardoned, saith the despairing soul. Consider how injurious this is to God, to make the power of sinne greater to condemn thee, then the power of God to save thee: to make the power of Satan stronger to ruinate thee, then the power of God to relieve thee, & succour thee. And what can you say more? and what

what can you doe more againſt the Lord? Is not this to make God an underling to Satan, and to ſin? This is juſt to ſay, The Almightineſſe of God is weaker then the weakneſſe of ſin; The ſufficieney of God is weaker then the malice of Satan. It is ſo; poore humble ſinners many times will make bitter complaints this way; and they think they ſpeake againſt themſelves. No, no, they ſpeak againſt the Lord. They ſpeak againſt the Lord, when they ſaid, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the wilderneſſe?* So you ſpeak in this deſperate manner: Why truth, Lord, this proud heart will never be humbled, if any thing would have wrought, it would have been done ere this day. How many Sermons, how many Mercies, how many Judgments, how many Prayers? and yet this proud heart, this ſtubborn heart will not bee reformed. You thinke you ſpeak againſt your ſelves now: no, no, you ſpeak againſt the Lord. And know, this is one of the greateſt ſins thou committeſt, to ſay thy

ſins

sins cannot be forgiven.

Secondly, as this sin is injurious to God, so its dangerous to thy own soule: It is that which takes up the bridge and cuts off all passages; and there can no Spirituall comfort not consolation come into the soule of a poore sinner, *Luke* 3. 15. *Every ditch must bee filled, and then all flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord.* What are these ditches? Why nothing else but those deep gulfes and ditches of despair: and unlesse these be filled, no man can see the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is this despaire of the soule, is that which cuts the sinews of mans comfort, and takes off the power and edge of all the meanes of grace; it daunts all a mans endeavours; nay, it plucks up endeavours by the very roots: for that which a man despaires of, he will never labour after. Its here, as with a man in the pangs of death: unto such a man, all things are unavailable for his good: his bed will not ease him, meat will not refresh him, chafing will not revive him; at last we

we say He is gone, he is a dead man; friends leave him, Physitians leave him: They may go & pray for him, and mourn for him, but they cannot recover him. So this despaire of soule makes a man cast off all hope, and lie down in a forlorn condition, expecting no good to come. Alas, saith the poor soul, what skilleth for a man to pray? what profiteth it a man to read? what benefit in all the meanes of Grace? The truth of it is, the stone is rolled upon me, and my condemnation is sealed for ever, and therefore I will never look after Christ? grace & salvation any more. Let him come to hear the word, and mark how he casts off the benefit of it. It was marvellous seasonable and profitable; it was the good Word of God unto such as have share therein: why then may not you expect benefit there from? No, saith the soul, the time of grace is past, the day is gone. If Ministers would pray for him, and good people pray for him, he bids them save their labour; for hell is his portion,

and

and his condemnation is sealed in Heaven. See now and consider what desperate danger Despair brings to a poor heart, and carries him beyond the reach of mercy. That's a sweet passage of *Davids*, *Psal.* 77. 7. *Will the Lord cast me off for ever? I said this is my infirmity*, saith the Text. The word in the Original, *This is my sickness*: as who should say, This would be my death: What, is mercy gone for ever? then my life is gone, then is all my comfort gone, my hope gone: Therefore take heed of this, it takes off the edge of all our endeavours and Gods Ordinances that might doe us good.

Secondly, this marvellously condemnes that great sin of Presumption; a sin more frequent, and if it be possible, more dangerous. The presumption of carnall hypocrites that bolster themselves up with marvellous boldnesse in their course. It is as true here, and I beseech you observe it, as they said *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands*: Despaire hath slain his thousands, but pre-

presumption his ten thousands. That men may sweat, and lye, and cozen, and break all Commands, and yet hope to be saved. They hope Grace will save them, and yet resist Grace: They hope Jesus Christ will save them, and yet oppose Christ. This is that which hath slaine many thousands among us; and they are few that have not split upon this rock. And therefore I say, This serves to reprove the baseneſſe of such hypocrites that boast themselves, & compare their hopes with the hopes of the Saints. It is true, say they, I cannot walk so freely, I cannot repeat a Sermon, I have not those parts that they have; yet I hope to be saved as well as they. This is that which hath slain so many thousands of souls that are now roaring in hell; and they may thank presumption for it.

Now this Hope is not the Hope of the Saints. The Hope of the Saints is a grounded hope: but these hopes hang upon some idle pleas, and fooliſh pretences, and some carnall reasons: But I tell you they wil fail,

fail, and sink into the botomeles pit ere they are aware. It is the command and counsell of *Peter*, That *every man should be ready to give an account of his faith and hope that is in him*. Look tothe reasons that carry you, and to the arguments that perswade you; see they be not groundles and fooliſh hopes. You hope to be saved, and you hope to go to heaven, and you hope to see the face of God with comfort. Look about, I say; good hope hath good reasons, grounded hope grounded reasons.

Thirdly, the Saints of God many times are deprived of comfort; not because God with-holds it, but because they put it from themselves, and will not have it, though he offer it; as *David*; *My soul refused com-* *Psal. 77.* *fort*: he was a sa sullen childe that will not eat his milk, because he cannot have it in the golden dish. So sometimes, and because God doth not for us what we would, we will have nothing at all. These are the maine hinderances, and I might adde many more: for carnall reason is very

very fruitfull this way, and wee through our owne folly, and the devills craft, are apt to abuſe things: and to make them hinderances in our way to happineſſe eternall. I come now to the cures of all the impediments, where, if we had the wiſdom and care we ſhould have, wee might break through them all to Chriſt. The Meanes (eſpecially) are foure, whereby we may be inwardly ſtrengthened againſt them all, and be at laſt able to overcome, and put them to foil for ever.

Helps to come to Chriſt.

The firſt Cure and Help is this; We muſt not look too long, nor pore too much, or unwarrantably upon our own corruptions within, ſo farre as to be feared or diſheartned by them from coming to the riches of Gods grace. For this is a ſure and everlaſting truth, That whatſoever ſight of ſin unfits a man for mercy. when he may take it, and it is offered, that ſight of ſin is ever ſinfull, though it have never ſo faire an outſide of ſorrow and deep humiliation. Namely, as when we think, and ſay (as often

wee doe) Had I a soule so thorowly humbled, and bruised, and softened, and so forth, I could do well enough. And thus the devil keeps us in sin, by poring too long and much upon our sins; as thinking thereby to get from them. But such a course is a sinfull course. Tell not me of sorrow, and repentance, and humiliation; all that sorrow, and humiliation, and repentance, is nought that keeps a man from receiving mercy, when there is need, and it is offered. See this in *Abraham*: hee had this promise, that he should have a Son in his old age: And, Hee *being not weake in faith, regarded not his old age or deadnesse, nor the barrennesse of Sarah's Womb, but believed in him who had promised it.* There he rests, and there hee stayes, he saw his body was dead, yet there was a living promise: and what though *Sarah's* womb was barren, yet the promise was fruitfull. He knew his own deadnesse and her barrennesse; but he stood not long there. As *Abraham* therefore, so we may see our sins, and consider our ma-

True godly sorrow what it is.

Rom. 4. 19

many weaknesses; but must not so settle upon them, or consider of them as to be hindered by them from coming to God for mercy, which he freely offers us, and we stand in need of: for, while the soule of a man is dayly plodding upon his own misery and distempered life, these two things follow.

First, stop the streame of Gods promise, and let down the sluce against it, so that the promise cannot enter into us.

And secondly, wee set open the stream and floodgate of corruption, and make it to runne most violently downe, and to flood in upon us; and in the end to over-whelm us. Now the inconvenience arising hereby, is enough to slay the best Christian in the world; for what can a man get out of his corrupt ones he can have no more thereof then is to bee had; and it is in vain to look for comfort where it is not to be had: all this and the least of all this may dishearten us, but will never encourage us, or put heart into us. See the humility

and wisdome of the woman of *Canaan*; she follows Christ; but hee listens not to her, but gives her a sore foile, and calls her *dog*; and saith, you Gentiles are *dogges*; and the Gospell of Grace and salvation is the *Childrens bread*. Now if shee had onely considered the words of Christ, and onely looked into her selfe and her owne baseneſſe, shee had never come to have received either mercy or comfort from him. But she saith, Truth Lord, I am a *dogge*, yet the *dogges eat of the crumbs that fall from their Masters Table*. This was her sure resolution: wherein there are two things which expresse and set forth the frame of a gracious heart; a heart that is truly wise to attend to its owne baseneſſe with faith: and that is her *humility* and *wisdome*: as if she had said, Thou sayest I am a *Gentile*, and a *Dog*; I confesse it: there's her humility. Yet though I am a Dog, I will not go out of doors, but lie under the Table for mercy: there's her wisedome. And thus she; and so wee must, and should

ſhould when our corruptions (as I ſaid) flood in upon us, and we ſee our ſelves quite loſt, and damned in our ſins, we muſt then ſay, In truth Lord, I am as bad as thy word can make me, yet let me not flye from mercy, but lie at the feet of my Saviours mercy, till he look upon me as once upon *Peter*, *Luk* 22.61.

It is fit and we ought to ſee our ſins: but ſtay we muſt not too long there: ſee them we muſt, but not faſten on them, ſo as to ſhackle us from coming to Chriſt. I have ſaid it, and will ſay it. That that ſight of ſin which doth not drive a man to Chriſt for mercy, is ever ſinfull. Labour therefore to ſee thy ſins, and that thus:

How to ſee ſin aright.

Firſt, See thy ſins in the Royal Law, as in the right glaſs; a glaſs that will preſent them ſuch as they bee; and look not off till thou haſt ſeen them ſo.

Secondly, So ſee them, as that by ſuch a holy gaze at them, thou mayſt ſee an utter inſufficiency in thy ſelfe to ſatisfie for them.

Thirdly, and so see them, that thou mayst by that sight behold an absolute necessity of Christ to succour thee, and then away speedily to him that can onely helpe thee, and dwell no longer on thy sinnes, but go to the throne of Grace, where is plentifull redemption, whence issue out pardons in abundance to remove that guilt that sin hath brought upon thy soule; and where is power enough to enable thee to bee more then conqueror over thy corruption. Briefly every soule should say thus; It is true Lord, my sinnes are many and great, for I have departed from thee the fountain of bliss: But shall I go on, and so further from thee, and persist in evill? God forbid. All this while I speak to broken hearted Christians. You profane ones, you have your portion already, and shall have more of it in Hell hereafter; threfore for a while stand you by, and let the children come to their bread,

Psal. 66. 2. opened. *The Lord lookes to him that is of an humble and contrite heart, and that trem-*

trembles before him. A poore creature cannot but obſerve every word of God, and tremble at every truth. Whoſe meditation is ſuch as this? Here is ſalvation indeed, but it is not mine; here is mercy, but I have no part in ſo great mercy; and thus hee ſhakes at every apprehenſion of every word of God, concluding certainly that he ſhall never enjoy any part of it. But mark what the Text ſaith, *The Lord looks at ſuch a trembling ſoule*; that is, he calls ſweet intimations of his goodneſs and love in to him, and ſaith, Thou poore trembling ſinner to thee be it ſpoken, I have an eye towards thee in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore he further ſaith;

Comfort ye, comfort yee my people, ſpeak comfortably to Jeruſalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, and her iniqnity is pardoned: tell Jeruſalem ſhe is accepted, tell her what my mind is. Iſai. 40. 2.

And here he goes on, & ſaith to his Miniſter, Speak to the heart of ſuch an humbled Penitential, and tell him from MEE, nay tell him from Ha-

ven, and tell him from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from under the hand of the Spirit, that his person is accepted, and his sins are all of them done away, and he himselfe shined upon in great mercy.

Here *Ephraim* is the picture of a soule truely humbled, in whose behaviour we may see the behavior of a true penitent toward God, and Gods dealing towards him. The Text saith, *Surely I have heard Ephraim be moaning himself* (there's the heart broken and thirsty) *thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; turn thou to me, and I shal be turned; thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, & after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did beare the reproach of my youth.* Thus the sinner, if he should have said, I am the wretch that have see all the meanes of grace in abundant measure, and yet never profited under the hand of any. The Lord hath corrected me, but I would not be tamed; and hee instructed me, but I would

Jer. 31.18, 19, 20.

would not learn Lord turn me. Thou art my God; I have nothing in my ſelfe; Nay, now I ſee the evills which before I never perceived; And I obſerve the baſeneſſe of my courſe, which before I conſidered not. Now I am aſhamed of my abuſe of grace ſo plainly revealed: I am even now confounded with the ſenſe of thoſe abominations my ſoul did formerly take pleaſure in. This may be conceived to be the mourning of a poor much broken ſinner. And now mark Gods anſwer: *Ephraim is my Sonne, he is a pleaſant Child: for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill, therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will ſure have mercy upon him.* As much as to ſay; I obſerved all thoſe ſecret ſighs, I conſidered all thoſe tears, I heard all thoſe prayers, and take notice of all thoſe complaints, and my bowels even yearn towards this poore dejected ſinner, an humble ſoule that ſeekes to mee for mercy. The truth is; I will embrace him with my loving kindeneſſe. This for the

firſt meanes of helpe.

2 Help. Now, the ſecond meanes of Cure is this, Take heed of judging thy eſtate by carnall reaſon without the rule, which is commonly the faſhion and fault of poore diſtreſſed ſpirits, who paſſe fearfull ſentence againſt themſelves upon groundleſſe Arguments, and ſay, I never found it. I feel no ſuch thing, and I feare it is not ſo. But in this wee heare but carnall pleas, comming out of Satans forge, and by his helpe, from our ſelves, againſt our ſelves, for wee judge our ſelves by them. But I ſay, Take heede of this wile of Satans, and make conſcience of this as much as of any other fault, as much as of ſwearing, ſtealing, whoring, or murder; for this is as truly a ſinne as thoſe, though not ſo great; yet a far greater ſinne then you imagine. Conſider this thou humble-hearted Chriſtian, for to thee I ſpeak. Therefore when upon theſe grounds thou concludeſt that thy caſe and eſtate is naught, ſee and conſider againſt how many Commandments thou offendeſt

The danger of judging our ſelues raſhly.

eſt. Firſt, thou diſhonoureſt God, and the work of his grace, by denying that which God hath done for thee; alſo, and ſpeakeſt *unreverently* againſt him; beſides, thou art a *murderer*, for that thou woundeſt thine own ſoule. Further, Thou robbeſt thy ſelfe of much comfort, and ſo art a *thiefe*; and thou *beareſt falſe witneſs* againſt ty ſelfe, yea, againſt Chriſt, and the Spirit of Chriſt, and the work of grace already wrought in thee. Alſo, thou joyneſt with the Devill againſt the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Are theſe no ſins?

But thou wilt ſay, I ſpeake as I think. Yet that hinders not, but that thou beareſt falſe witneſſe. As wee ſee, if a man affirm ſuch a one is a drunkard, and knowes it not, this man beares falſe witneſſe, becauſe though the man bee indeed a drunkard, yet it is more then hee knowes. So thou ſayſt that thou haſt nothiug, when thou doeſt but onely feare it. and ſuſpect it, and doſt not feel it. I ſpeake this the rather, becauſe of the ſinfull diſtemper that creeps,

creeps in upon the hearts of many broken hearted Christians; and so as that out of a selfe-will'd road of carnall reason, and a vile haunt that they have gotten, their hearts are perswaded that they doe well to doe so, and that they can never be well, except they do so.

But they that are such (mark what I say) when reason is plain against them, and plaine Scripture evidenceeth the contrary, doe not so much attend what the Minister saith, as they stand and invent how they may answer the Minister: and (so) put away their owne mercy. Therefore let the feare of God fall upon every poore soul that heareth this; and let him know, that howsoever hee hath taken or given leave to himselfe, or taken up the wasters, by taking up pleas against the truth: yet now hee is to change the course, to go aside, and to mourn apart for his misprision: also to wonder that the Lord hath not, all this while taken away all the comforts of his grace, and all the motions of his Spirit from him

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The Prophet *David* prayes the Lord to *turn away his eyes from beholding vanity*. Now if God muſt doe that; that is, turn away our eyes that they ſee not; much more muſt hee turne away our hearts that they attend not on lying vanities. Wee muſt attend God and the voice of his Spirit; but to liſten to carnall pleas (which we have no warrant to do) is no ſin deeply and to hurt our own ſoul both deeply and dangerouſly. No man would deal with a Cheater. Carnall reaſon is a Cheater, therefore wee ſhould not heede it, unleſſe wee would reſolve to be cozened. And now if the danger of the ſinne cannot make us to doe this; let the ſorrow that will come of it, conſtraine us. The Prophet ſaith, *Behold, all you that kindle a fire, and that compaſſe your ſelves about with the ſparkles that yee have kindled; this ſhall you have at my hand, yee ſhall lie down in ſorrow.* Theſe are the Prophet's words, nay, God's by him. And now I will tell you what is meant by *ſparkles*, and what by *fire*. In the old

Pſal. 119. 37.

Iſai. 50. 11.

old Law (as some of you know) there was heavenly fire kept continually upon the Altar of the Sanctuary, (which shadowed out the will and wisedome of God in his Word,) and there was also strange fire, that is, divers sparkles of mens *own* imaginations and conceits. Concerning this, every poor Creature carries his Tinder box about him, and is ever kindling of it. But such a fire much provoked God once, and so doth still. So saith the Text; in which are two things. First, That the heart of man will naturally invent carnall reasons and pleas against it self, and be setled upon them as upon the dregs of a vessel that is at a bottom Secondly, that the issue that followeth is fearful: For it is said, *This shall ye have of mine hand, yee shall lie downe in* your owne *sorrow*. Now then, when the Scriptures are cleare, and reasons upon it evident, yet you will have your owne devices and wayes; Thus much I must tell you, *You shall lie downe in sorrow* at last, and you may thank your selves for it.

Away

Away then with your Tinder-boxes, abaſe your ſelv s before the throne of grace, and be at laſt wiſe to ſalvation ſo nigh.

Ho, every one that thirſteth (ſaith God by his Prophet) *come and buy without money, take of the well of the water of l fe, and live for ever freely.* Many a poor Miniſter, while he preached the good Word of God, would fain leave his commodity behinde him, while he ſaith, You muſt have it; and you ſhall have it; it is your portion, and belongs of right unto you. Thus we are fain even to force Gods favours upon you. Hereupon we beſeech you to believe, and we entreat you for the Lord Jeſus ſake to receive mercy, and to humble your hearts.

Thus wee deale with you in Fatherly terms. But will you take ſo great and ſo good a commodity from us?

No, Beloved; many ſweet promiſes, and many admirable precious things of grace and ſalvation are revealed, but men are negligent to take for

for themſe ves: in this caſe, our markets ſtand upon our ſelves; we paſſe not to lay out any thing here to benefit: ſome carnall plea or other marrs all. This argues plainly the ſmall eſtimation that wee have of Chriſt. But the poor hungry ſinner, one that is apprehenſive of his owne weakneſſe and feebleneſſe, longs till the *feaſt day* cometh, that hee may partake of theſe and ſuch delicates. Oh how carefully doth he liſten, and how diligently doth he attend what the Miniſter ſaith? and if the Word come home to his conſcience, enlightning his heart, and reproving him of his wayes: then he cryes out; Oh, I am in great trouble; good Lord comfort mee: I am full of doubts; good Lord reſolve mee: I am ignorant in ſpirituall things; good Lord teach me. I haue a proud, ſtout, ſtubborne heart; good Lord humble me. He was never better then now. Therefore take this for a generall rule; That a good heart is never better at eaſe then when the Word workes moſt, and moſt biting-

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ly. Contrarily, a wicked graceleſſe perſon is never better then when the Word works leaſt, or never a whit upon him. But when he thinkes the Miniſter will come cloſe to his ſore and ſoul, he will not be at home that day, he will be ſure to be out of the Town, or not in place. He knowes the Word would awaken him, and affright him, and he cannot bear the blow, therefore he keeps away, and ſhuns the hearing of the Word, when it ſhould work to his reformation any way.

And now for a third Helpe, let us be marvellouſly wary and watchfull that we enter not into the liſts of any diſpute with Satan, upon points which are beyond the reach of man; as thus to ſay, I am not elected, therefore God will not look upon me to do me any good. Or, it is a vain thing for me to uſe the means of mercy, my time of mercy being out. Oh the dayes of grace that I have ſeen, when the Lord knocked ſweetly at my heart, and was pleaſed to reveal my ſinnes unto me at ſuch a time, 3 Help.

time: but then (hard hearted wretch that I was) I ſhut the doore upon him, and now he is gone and paſt; and now there is no hope for the viſit of grace, or that Chriſt ſhould return again to ſhew me any mercy. If the Devill can have thee here, all thy comfort is gone; for upon this gronnd a man ſhall never receive reſt to his ſoule, come what dayes will. And how can hee? for if he cannot judge of, or know comfort how ſhall I the Miniſter be able to give, or hee (the hearer) to take it.

And here look as it is with a poor travelling man, one that falleth among theeves, who come and promiſe to carry him a neerer way, but bring him into a wood whither no paſſengers come, and there they doe what they will unto him: ſo it is with a poor ſoule, when the Devl gets him into theſe unwarranted diſputes, as it were, large wilderneſſes of Gods eternall counſell, where are no paſſengers, and therefore he cannot but be void of helpes and ſuccour, and ſo, as that Satan may now exer-

ciſe

ciſe his full pleaſure, and whole malice by terrifying his poore deſolate ſoul. To avoid which ſtrait, obſerve theſe three Rules.

Firſt, let the ſoul in this caſe beare upon the Almightineſs of the power of God, who ſaid to *Abraham*, *I am God All ſufficient*. For if thou be perſwaded of the All-ſufficiency of God, that aſſurance cannot but ſtay thee (ſlipping) from falling. And here remember that God can doe more then thou canſt think. Hee is able, and doth thee good, though thou know it not. And further. conſider that the ſoule cannot doubt of Gods will, but with that very doubt makes ſome queſtion of his power. This for the firſt Rule. Gen. 17. 1.

For the ſecond, and ſecondly, it bids check to thine owne heart for medling with Gods ſecret, and for prying ſo into his Cloſet of hidden Counſels. For no man ſhould go beyond his bounds; and it appertaines not to thee to look into this Ark of matters ſealed up. *Secret things belong to God, but revealed* Deut. 29. 9.

thinge

things belong to us. And *Who hath known the minde of God:* saith *Paul.* Mark this, you that will be climbing up the ladder of Gods eternall Predestination, and going up into the skies to know what Gods secret minde is. Keep your stations wisely; for neither the Devil, nor all the devills in hell, ever knew the minde of the Lord. When *Jonah* cryed against *Nineveh,* saying, Within forty dayes all you; that is, all you drunkards, and adulterers, and murderers, and others; shall bee destroyed: Mark here how the King resolves; his words are, *Who can tell if the Lord will repent, and stay his fierce wrath that we perish not?* Therefore when the Devill tells thee thus much, and saith, God hath appointed a way to salvation, and you have had the meanes, and did not profit by them, therefore God will never shew you mercy. nor give you grace. Thus the Devill. But how can he tell that? Surely all the Devils in hell cannot tell it; say with thy self. Let me walk in that course which God hath appointed

1 Cor. 1. 2 16

Jona. 4. 19.

pointed and commanded, and doe that which I ought; then I may say, and with comfort say it; Who knows but God may break the heart of a proud, rebellious, contrarying sinner, such as mine is, and such as I am? None verily but God knowes whether or no. The third and last Rule follows.

Thirdly therefore, measure not the riches of Gods love, and the sweetnesse of his saving grace according to your own conceits; nor do you think that because you cannot conceive it, therefore God will not doe it, for *Isaiah* saith, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts*; that is, All you wicked ones, and you that have lived lewdly, return from your wicked wayes, and vain thoughts; and he will abundantly shew mercy. 3. Isai. 55.7, 9.

But will the Lord pardon all my sins, saith the doubting soul: *I cannot think it: If I my selfe were a god, I should never pass by such intollerable things as have been done by me.* Object.

But I answer: Because you cannot, Answ.

you

you think God cannot, or will not: Yes, saith the Lord, I can abundantly pardon: for my thoughts are not your thoughts nor my wayes as your wayes. A poor creature thinkes his sins are unpardonable, and that hee shall never get assurance of Gods favour, or hope of his love. But you are *men*, saith the Lord, and have finite thoughts; but I am a *God*, and in mercies infinite, when you think I will have no mercy.

Object. But were ever any such received to mercy as I, saith the drooping soule? and therefore why should I bee the only man?

Answ. To this I say: when Christ had wrought many strange miracles, the people said there were never any such things done in *Israel* And therefore it is plain not to be doubted, that God can doe things that never like were done: *He doth great things past finding out, and wondrous without number*, saith *Job*: and therefore judge not either Gods power or love by the scantling.

The best Christians are most suspi-

tious

tious of themſelves, and none fuller of doubts and fears, then thoſe that have leaſt cauſe to fear or doubt that their eſtates are broken & bad. Therfore Satan makes it his chief work to grieve and terrifie ſuch. Beſides, their own diſtruſtful hearts are always ready to joyn iſſue with his falſe reports againſt them, raiſing falſe ſurmiſes againſt themſelves, and putting mercy from them; as if they were hired by the Devil to take his part in pleading againſt their owne ſure ſalvation. Therefore it is worth the time to heare what *David* ſaith, *Pſal.*42. *The Lord ſhall command his loving kindneſſe in the morning.* It is a phraſe taken from *Princes* and great men, whoſe words are a Law of Command. For ſo God will ſend forth, as by a Commandment, his loving kindneſſe to a truly humble Chriſtian. As if it ſhould be ſaid: Go *love* and *everlaſting mercy*, take thy Commiſſion; and I charge thee go to that poor broken hearted ſinner, go to that poor, hungry and thirſty ſoule: go and proſper and prevaile and ſtamp

Pſal 42. 8.

ſtamp my love upon his heart, and there let it ſtand whether he will or no. Thus the Lord charges his loving kindneſſe to do good to poor ſinners, and by his own Almightineſſe beares up the ſoul, when it is ready to ſink under the weighty burden of its many tranſgreſſions.

Object. But what? ſhall I have mercy? No, no, (ſaith the doubting heart.) Will the Lord Jeſus accept me? No ſurely. Could I pray ſo, and ſo, and had I theſe and theſe parts, and could I perform duties after this and this manner, then there were ſome hope, but all is contrary, and therefore wo and alas, there is no mercy for me.

Anſw. But to anſwer this alſo, Let me tell thee, who ever thou art, that God invites thee in particular, as by name, and that all the ſweetneſſe in Chriſt, and in his precious promiſes appertaines to thy poor ſoul, and thou haſt as great an intereſt in them as any ſervant of God in the world whatſoever.

No, no, ſaith the trembling ſoule,

I cannot believe that such a wretch as I, shall, or can go to heaven. It cannot be. Heaven shall rather fall, then I come there. Thus the discouraged sinner knocks off mercy, and shuts the door against himself.

And now, when all carnal reasonings, and high soaring imaginations (as *Paul* calls them) have raised up strong Holds against mercy and comfort; when the Word cannot for the present settle peace in the unquiet soul; God is made at last to *command* his loving kindnesse, and send it with a Commission from heaven, and to say unto it, I charge you break open the doors of such a reluctant sinner, rend off that veil of ignorance that is before his eyes: silence all his doubts and fears: And when this is done, I charge you go home to that broken soul, and to cheere and refresh it with the sense of my sweet favour; and with the assurance of my love to fill it.

While we were enemies, saith the Apostle, *Christ dyed for us*. And here the Lord sends from heaven to a poor Rom 5. 8.

 misc.

miſerable creature, and ſaith, Commend my love, commend my mercy to ſuch a diſtreſſed ſoul, and tell it, Though it hath beene an enemy to me, yet I am a friend to it. Tell it, Though it hath been a Traytor to me. I have been a good King to it. And tell it, that though it hath been a Rebel to me, I have yet bin a loving God to it. Tell the man (whoſe heart that is) that his ſins are pardoned, his perſon accepted, and that his ſoul ſhall be ſaved. Tell him his ſighs and groans are not loſt, & that his prayers are heard in Heaven. Let him know that the Lord Jeſus dyed for ſinners when they were ſinners. Make all this good to his Soule. I charge you before you come back: So much for the third help.

Help 4, The fourth Cure is this. And it is ſpecially to be obſerved by a Chriſtian above all, in his proceedings with himſelf in Barre of Judgement; and that is: Paſſe no haſty ſentence againſt thy ſelfe, but according to the evidence of the Word. If thou art to be approved, let the word of God do

do it: and let the ſame word examine thee, if thou comeſt to be examined. If this Word ſpeake for thee, no matter, though all men and Angels ſpeak againſt thee, and if it condemn thee: no matter who ſpeakes for thee: By it, thou riſeſt or falleſt to thine owne Maſter. What though ſome wrangling fellow ſtep in, and will be determining cauſes before the Judge come: ſhall his word ſtand? No: therefore a wiſe man will ſtay till the Judge himſelfe doe come, and wait upon the judgement of his mouth. Deal thou no otherwiſe with thine own ſoule: put not the caſe to be tryed by a company of peeviſh carnall reaſons, but ſtay till the Word (wqich is the Judge) come; and judge thy ſelfe by that, and hold to that for thy life, and the life of thy ſoule. *The light is that which manifeſteth all things*, ſaith the Apoſtle. His meaning is: The light of the Word, and the evidence of Gods truth, manifeſted to the ſoules of Gods people; Theſe properly are the Judge: the other are but Ephe. 4 13.

wrangling cases, not to be admitted. And here sense and feeling, grounded upon carnall matter, are like foggs and mists which make a man in case that hee cannot see his way: but upon clearing up his state and condition is open before him; and then it is manifest what it is. *Learn of mee* (saith our Saviour) *and you shall finde rest to your souls*: And the Psalmist saith, *I will enquire what the Lord will say*, So say thou; I will not hearken what carnall reason will say; I will heare what God saith. The want of this, is cause why wee have so many distractions and disquiets, and why we are still in our doubtings; even because hee that teacheth, and can perswade with us, is a deluder.

Mat.11.29

And hereof it it. that the poore soul saith: What? shall I have an interest in Christ? shall I have title to the promises? Nay, this belongs to those that are broken hearted. Indeed if I had such power against corruption, such heavenly mineddnesse, and this and that precious grace, there were

were ſome hope ; but I am ſo full of weakneſſe, and many times led captive by ſuch a rebellious heart, that it is too apparent I never had ſaving grace : nay, I fear I never ſhall have it truly wrought in my ſoul.

This you ſay, poor ſoule : but who told you ſo ? and where learned you that Religion ? I am ſure you never learned it of Chriſt. For who or what word tells you, if I have ſuch a load of corruptions, I ſhall never have grace ? not the word of Chriſt, I am ſure, wherefore I charge you hold to the truth of the Word : Learn of *me*, ſaith *Chriſt*, and put not your cauſe to be decided by carnall Reaſon ; neither regard what it telleth you : for if you take that way and turn not back, you can never come to Chriſt, no way to him that way. Learne of the Lord Chriſt, (for his Word is faithfull, and his Promiſe ſure) and there you ſhall finde a Tovver of reſt as ſtrong as Mouut Sion. It is that Word vvhereby vvee ſhall bee judged at the laſt great day, vvhen ſenſe and

feeling shall be cast over the bar for deceivers and never come into Court again. And thus much of the foure cures; it rests that I now propound four Rules, by which a man may know how to order himselfe, and so to walke, that hee may keepe a strait course by the Word, and not turne aside to one hand, or other, from that guide of his way. And thus walking he may get into his hands the evidences that can assure him of a rest perpetual, and establish his minde with perfect peace. For they worke none iniquity, that walk in this way.

Rules to direct a Christian how to use the Word of God for his evidence, or assurance with peace.

Rule 1.

The first of these Rules teacheth to use the word of God aright: for as thou must in all things that concern thy Soul repaire to the Word; so thou must consider thine owne uprightnesse by it, and see what worke is in thy soule that is able to answer the Word, and to testifie that the

the worke of grace is there. And here bee ſure to take thy ſoule at the beſt: doe not alwayes pore upon the worſt that is in it, nor upon thy failings, nor that that can onely accuſe the; but if there be any thing there that may juſtly ſpeak for thee, neglect not that. It is an injuſtice for any Court to hear one ſide and not another. The Scripture is a Text of Juſtice, and the Lord doth not lie at catch with his Children, but takes them at the beſt: as *Rom.* 4. 22 it is therefore ſaid of that *Abraham believed the promiſe, and it was imputed to him for righteouſneſſe.* Indeed, as in the 12. of *Gen.* hee had ſome doubtings: but God took him at the beſt: and ſpeaks this his Faith. So *Sarah* is ſpoken of, as of a gracious Woman, and of a pattern for women, by calling her Husband *Lord*; which was a ſigne of reverence to her Husband, and an humble heart to the Lord. and yet we read that ſhe derided the Meſſage of the Lord by the Angel: the Lord buries that, and onely ſpeakes of that which was to

1 *Pet.* 3. 6. *Gen.* 18. 12.

her commendation, and ſo took her at her beſt too, Now as the Lord dealt with theſe, ſo ſhould we with our ſelves: whatſoever is found ſincere and upright in us, that ſhould we obſerve, as well as that which is not ſo; nay, that rather and before the other. If a man ſhould have his cauſe handled in any Court of Juſtice after this faſhion; namely, that (there) ſhould onely be obſerved what is failing in the cauſe, and never that, that makes for it; the beſt cauſe that is might go to ground: therefore the Court will hear all read: as every Bond or Bill that ſhall come in; and every matter of agreement; briefly, every thing: the cry will be, Let all be read. Again, ſuppoſe a man have a bond or other inſtrument in Court, and that the Lawyer only doth open and read the failings in it, and that vvhich ſeems to make againſt the party: If the Judg only hear that, hovv can it but go againſt that ſide? Therefore that party faith, Good my Lord hear all. Novv vvhen all is read: thoſe defects are corrected, and the

the canſe goes vvell, vvhich had not been ſo, if that Bond, or Deed, or other Inſtrument had been read to halves, not throughly. So vvhen men ſhall bring in ſo many and main Indictments againſt themſelves, and ſay, Oh what pride and ſtubbornneſſe is in my heart! O how weake am I, and dull, and dead, and backward to holy duties! Oh how careleſſe of enjoying communion with God! How negligent in ſifting and trying my owne heart, in watching over my ſenſes, and mourning in ſecret for my dayly failings! Though this were ſo, yet if men will ſee no more (and theſe too much) no marvell if they trouble their own houſe, or if Sathan by their own words judge them. To ſuch an one therefore I ſay, All that thou ſayeſt may be true; but art thou not troubled with theſe failings? and are they not the greateſt grief that thy ſoul hath? Yea ſaith the poore ſoul, I confeſs my heart is vexed, and my ſoul grieved for them; and I could bee content to be any thing that I could not

bee so. Now hear on this side, and take the best. For, as it is with a mans hand and the staffe, so it is here, I compare the promise to a staff; you know the back of a mans hand cannot take hold of the staff, but the palm of his hand can. So turne thou the right side of thy soul to the promise. and then thou mayst take by it: but wee take not by it, because wee turn the back side of our hearts to the promise: and then, the soule saith, Oh my stubbornnesse is great, and mine inabilities grievous, and corruptions many. But this is the wrong side; which will ever hinder thee from taking hold of the promise. But turn to the right side, and then say, My soul hates these, and my soul is right weary of them. Oh this is the right side; turne to that, and thou art well. This for the first Rule.

Rule 2. Now for the Second, and secondly, Labour to have thy conscience setled and established in that truth which now out of the Word thou hast gotten to bear witnesse of the work

worke of grace in thee. For if there be any want of the assurance of Gods love, and if the evidence of the work of grace come not roundly in, but there be some guilt of sin still remaining; conscience will make new stirs, and breed new broiles and continually move and unquiet the heart: therefore as it is good to have our judgement enformed by the Word, when vvee see the good that is in us; so it is meet wee should make conscience perswaded of it, so as Conscience may speake for us, and all bee made strait. Otherwise, as the debtor that is indebted to many Creditors, if hee agree not with all, or with all save one; that one may come upon him as well as all the rest: so for the poor distressed soule that lies at the mercy of the Lord, and is so deep in arrearages to the Law, that he cannot wind out; if he labour not to still conscience, and what is else against him, in every point as well as in some, if hee leave one undischarged, that one may set his conscience against him, as well as an hundred.

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The want of this, is the cause why new Suits and new Bills are dayly put in against us: only because Conscience is not pacified, nor all quieted. And now take a poore sinner that hath all his doubts and objections answered, come to him, and say, Are all these all your doubts and objections? he will say, Yea. And are they all answered? here he will say, Yea too. And have you now any thing to say against that which hath been made known unto you? no not now. But say to him again, Did your Conscience say to you. It is a sin to say you have no grace? here he demurs, and stops, and says, No, I dare not say so, but I rather say the contrary. And now marke what hee sayes: All the Books are croft, and all objections answered, and yet conscience puts in a new plea, because haply it was not satisfied to the full, and in every parcel of aberration.

And now come to him again, and say, You are sometimes captived by sinne, are you not? And are you

you willing to be at Gods free disposse, and that he should pluck away all your corruptions, as it were, shackles from you, are you not?

Oh, saith the poor sinner, I must needs yeeld to that. Then I affirm to thy soule, that this is a worke of true grace. Here (therefore) let Conscience bee fully satisfied. But how satisfied? Thus: Cancell all selfe-accusations, and this will cut all scores, and clear the heart, scattering all clouds that mist it. This will cast out all cavills, and all new Bills against us: *For, if our Consciences condemne us not, then we have boldnesse towards God.* We must then stop the mouth of conscience; that is, be convinced, and agree, that it is a sin to say, God hath not wrought this work of grace in the heart, when it is so clear hee hath. For though sense and feeling be (as it sometimes will be) gone, yet conscience remembers the day & year when the sinner had a cleare evidence of Gods love, and therefore saith, Lord thou knoweſt it, and thou didst say out of thy word

Word at such a time, that the heart of this poor soul was upright and sincere before thee.

And here it should be with a poor sinner, as with a wise man, when he would make his lands sure unto him and his posterity by evidences and writings sealed: hee is not content here onely to have his evidences in his own keeping, but will have them inrolled in Chancery, such a year, and such a day: that if he should lose his Deeds, he might bee sure where to finde them. So it should be with the distressed soul; st should not onely bee willing to have all objections to the contrary of it answered; but it should further get them recorded in the Court of Conscience, as in Chancery; that when sense and feeling are lost, yet it may readily go to that high Court of Conscience, and there finde the day and year when Gods love was made sure unto it. This for the second Rule.

Rule 3. For the third: Thirdly, we should strive, and that mightily, to have our hearts over powred with the evidence

dence that Reaſon and Conſcience make good unto us: that ſo we may quietly receive, and calmly welcome it; yea, and yeild and ſubject our hearts to the truth of it. But here wee all ſtick: and there are three things in the ſoul of a man; three, I ſay, that abet all theſe quarrells and oppoſitions againſt the evidence of the Word in that man. The firſt: for 1. Reaſon objects. 2. The ſecond: then Conſcience accuſeth. And the third: 3. The will of man will not ſubmit. And here wee finde by experience, that when a man hath ſtilled Conſcience, and ſilenced all reaſons to the contrary of his peace; yet ſuch is the Iron of a ſtubborn heart, that nothing can bar it; but ſtill it maintaines, and will; ſome gain-ſaying, and ſome new quarrels againſt the truth and it ſelfe. Beſides, it keeps on foot even that that hath beene long ago anſwered, and let down: nay, that a man would think had been buried in a deep grave (as deep as hell) never to riſe again. Now in this caſe it is with a poore

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ſinner, as with a man that hath a contentious adverſary. Haply the cauſe that they two have in hand, hath been tried in all Courts of Law, and at laſt comes to the Chancery; And there it is concluded againſt the cavilling Adverſary, as in the other Courts; there all matters are as well ſtated and ordered as a man would wiſh, and as an honeſt man would grant: Yet will not this man, that is ſo contentious, be ſo concluded, or ſo yeeld, but will to the Law againe with a back Suit, and then, and upon that old grudge, ſtake down all he hath, and ſell all to his ſhirt. His will hee will have, whatever it coſt him. Nor will hee give over, till the Judge doth come to take notice of him, and ſo to caſt out his Cauſe with himſelfe, whom therefore he commits to priſon, and ſaith, Sirrah, theſe matters were (all of them long ago anſwered, and will you trouble us again, not with new matters, but with old quarrels?

Juſt ſo it is with the heart even of a gracious man ſometimes, and one

one that is humbled in some measure; and could be content to yeeld to the commanding power of Gods Word, and to the witnesse of his owne Conscience; and therefore saith, My condition is better then I thought it was; yet there is an old proud, selfe-will'd heart still in me; an heart that will not be quieted nor said unto; but still will be quarrelsome, and maintain the old exception. For though all reasons are well confuted, and conscience bears witnesse it is so; and the Ministers, as the Judge under Christ, casts out the Cause: yet (observe it) the poor distressed sinner will keep the old road of objecting against himselfe: And though he hath been answered fully, and to every point, not many hours, before; yet he keeps old matters still fresh, and out of the Salt, till they yeeld a foul sent to all that come within the hearing of them. And thus, even when a man would think he should not dare to come in Court with such old cashiered stuffe; yet that proud selfe-will'd heart will be do-

doing ſtill, nor will yeeld or give over. Have wee not juſt cauſe then to labour our hearts ſo farre as to get them over powred with the authority of the truth concerning whatſoever God reveals to them for their good? Oh therefore, poore ſoul, do not reject the evidence which God makes known, and paſſeth upon thee for thy ſure welfare eternally. Doe not, becauſe thou haſt not that comfort that thou wouldſt, reject all; as if thou wouldſt have none at all. So then the fault here is not properly becauſe thou canſt not, but becauſe thou wilt not receive the promiſe: and this is that that ſo wracks and torments thy Spirit; this is that which breeds the quarrell ſo hard to bee compounded; and hence it is, that when Reaſon is ſatisfied, aud Conſcience convinced; yet the ſoul is perplexed ſtill, For put this queſtion to it, and ſay unto it; Are you perſwaded that the Lord hath done you this good, that hee will ſhew an everlaſting mercy to your ſoul? and it will ſay No; and that all the world

world shall not perswade it of that. Ministers are mercifull (will such a distempered soul say) and Christians are charitable, and loath to displease too much, or to discourage one in my case, or do to me as I should do to them: but did they know me indeed, they would never think thus of me: certainly I shall never finde it so. What? have I grace? all the World shall never perswade me to it, Marke what I say: This is meerly thy pride and selfe-willednesse, that will not receive that good which God is willing to give thee. But repent, or this pride of thy pettish heart will cost thee dear, one day; I wish not.

But some will say, How can you make this pride? wee are ever complaining of, and condemning our selves; And can this be pride? *Object.*

Yes, I say, (and mark what I say) it is intolerable pride against the Majesty of Heaven: and this I make good by these two things. For, first, for a man to follow his owne conceits aud selfe-willednesse *Answ.*

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againſt the truth, the force of reaſon, and the witneſſe of the ſervants of God, and his own conſcience; cannot but be pride.

Secondly, And for a man, becauſe he hath not what hee would, to bee (therefore) off the hinges ſo, as to throw away all Gods kindneſſe, and to deny the grace that is given him: and this becauſe he cannot bee Conqueror as he deſires; is not this pride? That meaſure of mercy which God hath already ſhewed to thy ſoule, is incomprehenſible, beyond mans reach; and yet becauſe thou canſt not have what thou wouldſt, thou wilt have nothing at all. Juſt as if a man that hath the Law on his ſide, and his eſtate ſetled on him, ſhould, becauſe his evidences are not written in great golden Letters, nor in the largeſt Royal Paper, throw all away. This is your caſe: for ſo you, becauſ you have not ſo much of grace, or with ſuch a ſweetneſſe as you would, yon deny you have any. But have you no humility, becauſe none to your minde, or not ſo much,

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or not in such manner as you require? Oh pride; and pride in the highest degree!

These things considered, labour to bring your hearts more downe in a holy subjection to Gods measure and time. And thinke it your duty, as well to receive comfort when God offers it upon good termes, as to doe any duty commanded. And know that it is as truly a sin (though of a bigger size) to reject mercy when God offers it, as to kill a man, which God hath forbidden. I say, Not as much: for I know there is odds in the degree. Therefore you (the Saints of God) that have been thus pettered, and thus possest to become your own enemies; remember (when your hearts begin thus to slide away) to take your hearts unto you, and not to give them the reins at such desperate conclusions against God and Conscience. Deal better with your soules, and say, Good Lord, this is the proud unyeelding distemper of this vile heart of mine. For, what would I have? Is not Gods Word clear

clear in this point, and my conscience satisfied? Do not the Ministers of God affirm my state to be good? and shall I thus dishonour God, and slight them?

Object. But what saith the poor soule to this? Must I eat mine own words? Must I say and unsay? say I have grace, when before I said, I had none?

Answ: Yes and bee thankfull too to God that you way say so. Is it not better for you to cross your own flesh, then to cross Gods Spirit? Take notice of this, & fear least that proud and pettish soule of yours (which now refuseth consolation when God offers it) be forced to fare as a man that eats his owne flesh, and so to come upon her knees for comfort, and get none to her dying day. For though God will save you at last, yet (mean while) you shall have an Hell upon Earth before this be.

One would have thought it had been great humility in *Peter* to refuse to let Christ *wash his feet*; but it was no such matter. Indeed, nothing

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leſſe; therefore Chriſt takes him up roundly for it (which is indeed, the onely way to cure ſuch a diſtemper as this.) *If I waſh thee not, thou haſt no part in me.* If you will needs have your owne way, and humour your ſelfe, and will not bee perſwaded; you may go down to Hell in the minde. *Peter* might have pauſed here, and taken breath; but did not: his ſtout ſtomach quickly came downe, and hee preſently ſaid, Then; *Lord, not onely my feet, but my hands, and head*; and all. It is the humility of a good heart, to take what God offers. Moſt Chriſtians think they are humble hearted, when yet they are ſo far proud, as to give way to this ſullen diſpoſition. Therefore labour to over-maſter this overſoaring heart of thine, with the authority of the Word of God and be ſure to receive mercy while God offers it, leſt hee draw in. and take away the comfort of his ſpirit from thee, and make thee go howling and roaring to thy grave. Though hee bring thee to heaven in the end; yet thou mayſt have

Joh. 13. 8, 9.

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an uncomfortable Hell before thou comeſt thither.

Rule 4. So for the third Rule, the laſt followeth. The laſt Rule is this: Maintaine the good work which thy heart hath ſubmitted unto, and keep it as the beſt thing in thy houſe, and (of treaſure) the beſt under heaven And then, when thou haſt by it obtained certain evidence that thy eſtate is good; hear nothing againſt it, but ſtick faſt to it, as to thy life. Regard nothing (what is not in the Word) to the contrary of that evidence of thy ſalvation that I meane, which thou haſt been perſwaded of by the Word of truth. And here, if Satan or carnall reaſon have any thing to ſay againſt thee, let them bring Scripture, and then yeeld to it in the true ſenſe; but without the word heare nothing. Look as it is with a man that is at Law for Lands; if he have his adverſary on the hip, and have gotten ſome advantage againſt him, he will keep him there, and hold him to the point. So do thou in a better caſe. For, if a man will follow every

very wrangling Lawyer at every impertinent quillet or out-leap hee muſt never look for an end of lawing: and it is the faſhion of many Atturneys, rather to breed quarrells, then to kill them in the conception. So in this caſe, hee that will quarrell where he may reſolve, ſhall never have done. And therefore hold to the maine point. Deal with Satan as with a ſubtil adverſary that is full of wiles and fetches, It is the cunning of the enemy to lead you aſide: and he will have many vagaries (if you be in a good Way) to bring you out: But bee ſure to hold to that truth which you have received from the evidence of the Word and the witneſs of conſcience. When a man hath gotten ſome comfort, then the Devil begins to play the Lawyer in this or the like manner.

How the ſoule being tempted may anſwer Satans accuſations.

Doſt thou not ſee how weak and poore thou art? how deſtitute of all *Satan,*

saving grace, and how contrary thou walkest to God?

Sinner. It is true (saith the soule) yet it is as true that he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.

Satan. But (saith the Devill) dost thou not see that thou art full of pride and weaknesse, and secretly unwilling to come to duties?

Sinner. It is true (saith the soule) I am so, yet I hate and desire to forsake this way, and therefore shall find mercy; the word saith so.

Satan. But (saith the devill) are you of Gods counsel? secret things belong to God.

Sinner. Indeed (saith the soul) I know not what Gods sceret will is; yet that I know, that the word saith; which is, *He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner*, but invites such dayly to come unto him.

Satan. But (saith the Devill (many cozen themselves: mercy is as a black Swan, a rare bird, and few obtain it:

it: and why (then) may not you bee cozened as well as well as others?

Sinner. But (saith the soule) the Lord will not cozen me, and the Lord knowes my heart; and the word knows what the Lord knows.

Satan. But (saith the Devil) may not you be deceived in the letter of the word? the word is true indeed; but how know you that you rightly apply it, and that the word and your heart sute together?

Sinner. Why (saith the soul) I desire as earnestly to have my sinne purged, as I doe to have it pardoned. I know my heart by the word, and to the word I repaire; and the Lord knowes that I hate all sinne inwardly, and reforme it outwardly, to my weake power; and therefore I know I shall finde mercy. Shew mee a place of Scripture that saith I doe not rightly apply the word, and I believe it; but I will not beleeve thee; for thou art as thou wast from the beginning, a lyer. Thus hold to the word, and the Devill will bee tired, weary and leave thee; keep you

here, for if he catch you a wandring after ſenſe and feeling you are gone. The Prophet ſaith: *Thou through* thy Commandements *haſt made mee wiſer then mine enemies, for* they *are ever with me.* Sathan is wiſe by long experience; and the fleſh, and carnall reaſon, and the world are wiſe too: but bleſſed be our God that makes every poore ignorant ſervant of his, wiſer then all theſe. But how? the word muſt ever be in your hands, and the meditation of it in your hearts: it muſt be alwayes with you; and you muſt keep it with you dayly: for that will make you not to know onely what is amiſs, but to get ground againſt corruption, and whatſoever elſe may hinder your peace with God and with your ſelves.

Pſal. 19. 98.

Satan deales in this caſe with the ſoule, as the enemie in warre when *Joſhua* defeated the men of *Ai*, hee got them out of the Cities; and then they that lay in an buſh went and took it, and burnt it with fire. So the Devill doth: Our Caſtle or City

Joſh. 8. 19.

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is the Promiſes, the Word and Ordinances of God: Now if the Devill can but get you out of this Caſtle, hee hath you where hee would: if you will looke after every bird that flies, and liſten after every word of carnall reaſon and temptation that comes, you are gone: If hee can get you from the ſure Hold of the promiſe, he will entangle you in his ſnare of unbeliefe, and ſo prevaile againſt you.

Little children, if ye abide in Gods Commandements, ye abide in God, ſaith the Apoſtle. As if he had ſaid, Children, your enemies are many, and great, and cunning, therefore keepe home, and within the walls of your ſure hope, and then you are well, whatſoever weather is up. It is the faſhion of parents, if their children run abroad and catch a knock, to tell them that they are well enough ſerved; you might have kept home when you had warning. So here, 1 Joh. 2. 28.

The iſſue of the point is this: Judge thy ſoul by the Word and look upon that ſacred Piece in the glaſſe of

it ſelfe: And here, let it bear witneſs for thee: and what the Word of God doth evidence to thee, that doe thou maintain, and heare nothing againſt it. This is the way to receive conſtant comfort, and the way to go on cheerfully in thy Chriſtian courſe. Let quarrels, troubles, and temptations come, yet keepe thoſe within doores, and reſt thy ſelfe upon the riches of that grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus. Then you may bee for ever comforted, and go ſinging to heaven and merrily to your graves, though you meet with never ſo many temptations and oppoſitions, croſſing your way.

Now follow ſome means to obtaine an intereſt in the Promiſes.

It reſteth that I ſhew you ſome meanes whereby a man may ſo improve his time, that at laſt hee may obtaine this bleſſed eſtate of being merry in the Lord. The meanes are four. But before I begin with them, you muſt firſt know, that wee may uſe

uſe the meanes, and yet finde no meanes under heaven to do it, except God ſtrike the ſtroke, You muſt therefore waite upon God, and the Spirit of God in the uſe of the means for this matter, by believing rightly to your aſſurance. For, ſo the Text ſaith, *To you it is given to believe*; it muſt be given thetefore: and faith is the free gift of God. It is God then that muſt doe it; who yet will not doe it without us, being reaſonable men and women in the power of willing. Againe, the Lord affords us means; yet not to uſe them, and give him the ſlip. And here it is a good ſaying; Let the Lord doe what-hee will, and let us doe what wee ſhould. Wee muſt not thinke when wee have the meanes, that we can get faith preſently: for, as *Paul* ſaith, *The ſame power that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, muſt make us able to believe*; Ep. 1. 20. or elſe all the Angels in heaven, and all the Miniſters on earth, and all help that men and means can give us, will doe us no good. Now the means are of divers kindes: as, hearing,

and prayer, and Sacraments, which are the Conduits from which God communicates faith. But I let them pass, and fasten upon those which are needful for feeble Christians to the bringing of them into this blessed estate of rightly believing. And these are such as follow.

First, wee must, as much as in us lies, labour to pull away all those carnall outward stayes that the soule leanes upon, and all other like succours, and whatsoever contentment it is, which a poor sinner doth betake himselfe to as to his refuge, for relief and helpe; that when all these are taken from us, we may be forced togo for succour thither, where right succour is to be had. It is a thing natural to us all; even from our first Parents; a desire to have the staffe in our own hands, and to be able to supply our selves of all necessaries, without being beholding to others, or to any.

1 *Means.*

Now therefore the way to make the soule leane upon Christ, is, to pluck away all those deceiving props,

Props. The laſt thing wee fly unto, is the promiſe; which if wee could finde good any where elſe then in Chriſt, wee would never go to him for it. God heares laſt of us; and therefore here wee ſhould doe with our ſelves, as the enemy doth with a City beſieged, when hee would make the Inhabitants, or thoſe that keepe it, to yeeld; The way he takes is to famiſh them, to cut off all proviſion, and ſtop all paſſages, ſo as that none can come to relieve them: then they preſently yeeld themſelves to the mercy of the Aſſailant: ſo it is with our nature; and ſeeing it is ſo that wee are ſtill truſting to our own ſtrengths, and relying upon ſome thing of our owne; the beſt way were to famiſh the heart by cutting off all the meanes and comforts whereby the ſame is ſuccoured, and quieted; but not rightly in Chriſt. For when the heart is thus famiſhed, it will then ſeek out to a Saviour, and there be, becauſe there is no other thing or meanes otherwiſe to helpe it.

Mar. 5. 26, 27. The poor woman in the Gospell had spent all her goods upon the Physitians; and if shee had had but a little meanes left, yea, but one farthing token (for any thing I know or doth appeare) shee would never have gone to Christ: But when all these failed, then shee was forced to seek to Christ, that was ready and willing to doe that for her, and more then shee desired. Our soules must have something to bear upon; and they cannot subsist without some under-props. Herenpon therefore, when all our carnall hopes are taken from us, we stay (as we must needs) upon the Promise, because wee have nothing else to rest upon. Yet it is not required (though I thus speak) that a man should cast away all outward comforts, such as God affords him for the interim here; Oh no: but onely this; That (though hee have much this way) yet that he labour to get his heart to see and acknowledge the insufficiency and nothingnesse of them all, till hee have the superlative comfort, Christ, above

bove all; and not to repoſe in them (having them) as ſome doe, making them our whole contentment, and ſole reſt: For then they are but lying vanities, and broken ſtaves, which wil not onely cozen us, but pierce us too, and that deeply.

And now when the ſoule ſeeth that that theſe cannot ſuccour it, but lay it in worſe caſe; a man will then be content to have his heart divorced from them. And here it is with the ſoule as it was with *Noahs Dove*, when the Arke began to reſt upon the mountaine of *Ararat*. *Noah* then ſent out the Dove: but the Dove *found no reſt for the ſole of her foot*. No queſtion there were many dead carcaſes to ſettle upon; but the Dove found no reſt, till ſhee came to the Ark again. So when a man findes no reſt in any thing the creature affords, and can get no footing for the ſoule there to ſtay it ſelfe upon; then it betakes it ſelfe to Chriſt the Ark, and goes home to the promiſe, and reſts there, and expects from thence what is needfull

for

for it. As (therefore) in the Art of Swimming; hee that will swim; must pluck his feet from the bottom, and commit himselfe to the streame to beare him up: so in this our purpose to heaven, wee must draw our hearts from these vain things below, and these from them; and though wee have honour and preferments, yet wee must put no confidence in them, but pluck our affections, as it were feet, from them, and learn by our believing to commit our selves wholly to the power of the promise, and thence to receive comfort, and permanent abiding.

Let not the gods of this world, then, as Honour, and Profit, and Pleasures, deceive thee. Did the pride of *Pharaohs* heart deliver him? Did the riches of the rich man in hell save him? Did *Herods* applause that he had, do him any good? Did these gods secure them? nay, have they not left them in the lurch? Therefore let us take our hearts off from these things, and (in comparison to those of our better life) have a base

baſe eſteeme of them, and ſee ſo great a vanity, and emptineſs and inſufficiency in them all, that wee may bee forced to ſeeke to Chriſt, and ſay as *David*, *Helpe, Lord*; *for vain is the helpe of man.* Labour we further to ſee the privy prankes of our owne hearts, and to hunt out all thoſe mazes, and turnings and windings of our ſubtle ſouls: for here, it is wonderfull to ſee how the ſoule is ready to hang her comforts upon every hedge, and to ſhift and ſhark in every by-corner for them. Now when thou ſeeſt thy heart thus ſeeking comfort in vain helpes, call it from them, and them pluck away, and up by the roots, and ſee the emptineſs of them: then will thy heart bee fit and ready to make out to Chriſt. And thus for the firſt means.

Secondly, therefore when this is done, there is in ſome part, ſome way made for the promiſe to come into thy ſoule; and therefore labour thou in the ſecond place, to have thy heart poſſeſſed thorowly, and perſwaded effectually of the fulneſſe of that good

good which is in the promiſe, and of that ſatisfactory mercy and freeneſſe of the grace that is in Chriſt; ſo that the ſoule may bee eſtabliſhed with that full content which is to be had in the riches of the promiſe. But mark what I ſay; Let us perſwade our hearts firſt; and not content our ſelves that wee are able to diſpute ſomewhat fully of the excellency of the promiſe, and of thoſe riches in it, through the free grace of God in Chriſt. For, what is it to purpoſe that the heart knowes this, and knowing it, to be ſo fore-ſtall'd, that it can never come to the promiſe? Therefore leave not thy heart till it come to value the promiſe by that that the Word ſpeaketh of it in a true account. I ſay, Leave not thy heart, till thou ſee the promiſe of grace moſt beautiful in thine eye, and that thy heart may get ſome earneſt touching the goodneſſe of God, and the riches of his grace towards thee by the ſame. And here bring thy heart to know and ſee, that the promiſe is better then all the riches and ho-

honours that thou canſt have, or the world can beſtow: for ſo wee read, *They that* know thee, *will truſt in thee; for thou Lord haſt never failed them that ſeek thee.* If thou knoweſt, and wilt believe this, this kinde of knowledge and perſwaſion cannot but breed confidence and reſolution, and (conſequently) quiet the heart. We dare truſt a friend whoſe faithfulneſſe we have tryed; and wee reſt upon that which wee know by the ſure card of experience. The promiſes of God are (all of them) as true as Goſpell. Seek from one end of the heaven to the other; turn all the Bible over, and ſee if ever any man leaned on the promiſe, and the Lord did not performe what hee had promiſed for the good of his ſoule. *Except the Lord had been my delight I ſhould have periſhed in my troubles.* (ſaith *David,*) *My fleſh faileth, and my heart alſo; but thou art the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* But here lies a great matter, a work of marvellous difficulty and great neceſſity; und therefore, that thy heart

Pſal. 9. 10.

Pſal. 19. 92. Pſ. 73. 26.

heart may sit down satisfied with the sufficiency of the promise, I will propound three rules how the promise may bee improved and conduce to thy singular benefit here and hereafter.

Rule 1. How to improve the promises for our benefit.

For the first of these Rules: Labour dayly to present thy soule a greater good in the promise, then thou canst see any where else. It is a mans skill, (and it should be his endeavour) daily to dog his heart, and to looke what it is that the heart desires most; and accordingly to present the greatest good unto it. And what may that bee? even that which hath more of contentment in it, then any thing else in the world. And here, wee should deale with our hearts, as a man will with a corrupt Justice, when hee would have him to bee on his side: there, the onely way is to bribe him: but though this be sinfull in this case, yet it is good to bribe (as it were) the corrupt heart with the goodnes of the promise; that so the heart may cleave to it, and long after it. Do ho-

nours,

nours, or riches, or the applauſe of men, or any earthly pleaſures offer thee content and ſatisfaction? then perſwade thy heart there is a greater worth in the promiſe, then can bee had in all them. For here is *an exceeding weight of glory*: and he that hath it ſhall bee made a *King*, and ſhall have that glory that will *never fade*. Further; doth thy heart hanker after earthly joy and mirth? thou ſhalt finde more joy in the promiſe, then in the cracking of theſe thornes. Doth thy heart hanker after riches? tell thy heart that there are *unſearchable riches in Christ*, and that through him, we have title to all the promiſes of this life, and a better. Wee know that hee that offers moſt for the bargaine hath it: therefore wee ſhould obſerve the goings out of our hearts, and what offers are made to give them the beſt content, and with ſuch to preſent them. This the promiſe doth; and this with a greater good in God, then in all things in the world beſide. Therefore; *Oh the height and depth.*

and

and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!

The consideration of so much, should not onely worke a longing after Christ, and the promise; but fill our faces with shame and confusion, that ever wee should set so light by such riches of mercy, and walke unworthy of so great salvation. Could we comprehend the unmeasurable dimensions of Gods love and goodnesse revealed in his word: Oh how would our hearts bee enflamed towards him? When the sinner thinkes thus with himselfe; I that have done all that I could against so good a God, that my heart even bleeds to thinke of it, there was no name under heaven that I tore in pieces more, or so much as Gods name; his *wounds*, and *life*, and *heart-blood* I have rent and torn a thousand times. Nay, there was no command in the world that my soule so much despised, as the command of the Lord Jesus. There was no spirit that ever spake to me, which I so much resisted as the Spirit of the Almighty.

Oh

Oh how many sweet motions hath the Lord let into my soule, thereby to force mee from my courses so base, and practises so sinfull? By how many mercies hath hee allured me; by how many gracious promises hath hee invited mee; by how much of his goodnes provoked me to forsake my sinnes, and to turn unto him? But I have flown in the face of his *Ministers*, and *blessed spirit*, and rejected all tearmes of reconciliation. If I had lien in a dungeon, and beene plagued with torments all my life time; yea, though I could have had another world full of misery to live in, I should count it infinite mercy, so the Lord would passe by my sinful miscariages, and pardon these inward insurrections.

But that God should send his dearest *Sonne* to love me, and that so incomparably and so unconceivably, as that I could not possibly hate him so much, as hee loved and affected me; that I could not so exceed in unkindnesse towards him, as he hath exceeded in tender kindnesse towards me;

What

What a love is this? What, unkindneſſe for ſo great a love? Were it not righteous with God, never to ſpeak comfort more to my ſoul, that have ſo lightly eſteemed his promiſe, and ſweet word of comfort? Had it not been juſt with him now to ſit at the catch, and to take all this (as he well might) for an advantage againſt me? Was it not juſt that I, which lived in ſinne, ſhould have periſhed in my ſinnes? and as juſt that I who have ſo much loved corruption, ſhould have reaped the bitter fruit of it, long ere this? But that the Lord ſhould finde an enemy, and not ſlay him; nay, that he ſhould give his beloved *Sonne* out of his owne boſome to ſave him; is a love not to be expreſſed. Oh the *height* of this mercy beyond all deſire or thought! Oh the *breadth* of this mercy, a breadth without any bounds! Oh the *length* of this mercy, a length beyond all times! Oh the *depth* of this mercy, a profundity beyond all expreſſion!

Labour here (therefore) to have ac-

acceſſe to the promiſe, and to bring thy ſoule unto it. Here, ſpeak a good word for it, and ſay; Stand off profits, and pleaſures, and preferments; room for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Thus ſpeak, and ſet a peerleſſe moſt excellent price upon the promiſe: and bee ſure of this (for it is a ſure Rule) whatſoever the ſoule doth account as beſt, that it will chuſe, and leave all others for it. Therefore if the ſoul could once out-bid the World, and out-ſhoot the Devill in his own bow, and put by all thoſe things which the Devill caſts as rubbes in its way of coming to the promiſe; this labour would bee a work of great gain, and uſher in the promiſe it ſelfe. For example as thus, when thou ſeeſt thy heart look after friends; let thoſe friends uſher the way to think on the infinite love and favour of God in Chriſt, that friend, as he calls himſelfe: and when thy heart would hunt after wealth, let this uſher a way to the promiſe, and ſay, If the heart finde ſuch content in riches, what ſhall it finde in the riches of Gods

Gods grace in Christ! And thus present a greater good from the promise then any, from any thing else; and thou dealest safely and well for thy selfe. This for the first Rule.

2. The second Rule is; Labour to bring thy heart to this. That all the things in the world without the promise are nothing: and that if thou hadst all that the earth can afford, and not it, thou hadst gotten but the winde, or that which will rather be a curse unto thee then a blessing: For, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for.* It gives a kinde of
Heb. 11. 1. being or subsistence to all. So that there is no subsistence in honour or riches, if they subsist not by Faith; and without faith they are clogges and snares to us, no helpers; except faith give them their denomination and a blessing therewith, they are poore and empty things. Our prayers, if they want faith in the promise; are prayers of no substance; words, and nothing else. On the other side, the most broken and chattering prayers of a poor soule. when

a

a poore creature can ſcarce utter five words with any ſenſe; yet theſe (how weake ſoever) mingled with Faith, are a very powerfull prayer. So all your hearing, and my preaching hangs upon Faith; otherwiſe they are but toſt labour, wanting that that gives a kinde of being to whatſoever I ſdeak, or you hear. This for the ſecond Rule.

The third Rule in this ſecond of the meanes, is this: Labour to acquaint thy heart with that good, which the promiſe promiſeth: and this, before carnall reaſon comes and poſſeſſes thy heart. Remember here that the promiſe is moſt ſure, and will come when it ſhall bee moſt ſeaſonable, and beſt for thee, and when God ſees it moſt fit; for then, we ſhall moſt certainly have it. *Let us therefore come bolaly to the throne of grace, that wee may receive comfort and mercy in time of need.* Not when we ſee it fit, but when God ſees it fit and profitable. But this is which carries away many. Sometimes they are a little affected with the excellency of the riches of Gods

3.

Heb. 4. 16

Gods grace in Christ, and seeing what great things the Lord hath done for their soule, they say; Oh that I were such a one; and oh that I might die the death of the righteous! But when it comes so to passe that they have not what presently they expect, then they cast away their hope; and then the good promise of GOD being out of request, the Devill presently steppes in and wonderfully prevailes with them: They say with the Prophet, *When the fig-tree shal not blossome, neither shal the fruit be on the Vines; when the labour of the Olive shall faile and yeeld no fruit, then will I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.* Hab. 3. 17. But where no blossoms are, nor fruits appeare, there all joy goes to ground. We doe not consider that comfort from the promise, and from the Lord Jesus, is then most seasonable, when wee have most need, and (consequently) may receive most good by it: for then may we be sure to have the promise so to surprise our heart, that it shall bee possessed and

and made happy with the All-sufficiency of God. But we go not so farre. This for the second rule.

In the third place, look for all the good which thou needest and canst desire from that sufficiency which is in the promise; and do not think of thy selfe to adde any good unto it, but go to it for all thy good: For, *there* are all the cords of mercy that must draw thee; and *there* is that All-sufficiency that can supply thee, and therefore look for all from thence, but think to bring nothing thither; nothing (I say) that can be of power to enable thee to a power of believing. 3. *Means.*

And here, it is a weak Plea for a man to say, I dare not look to the promise, I cannot believe it; for if I could (and oh that I could) then I might expect some good fruit from it. *Object.*

To answer this; Thou shalt never believe upon these termes; for, thou must not first have faith, and then go to the promise, but must first go to the promise for the power *Answer.*

of that faith; from it thou must receive power to believe. And therefore say with the Prophet, *O Lord, remember thy word to thy servant wherein thou hast caused me to trust.* When men are enlarged in love to man, and make fair weather of promises unto him; this perswades him to trust unto them, and to rely upon them for good to come, therefore he saith, I durst never so much as have thought of it, much lesse expected it, if you had not promised so much.

Psa. 119. 49

And even so here, the promise of God (made to the soul) makes the soule to rest upon what is promised,

To expect faith without a promise, is as if a man should expect a crop of Corn without seed; for the promise is the immortall seed of Gods Word, whereby the Spirit breeds this faith in the hearts of all that are his. So Christ, *The houre is comming and now is, when the dead shall heare the voice of the Sonne of God, and they that heare it, shall live.* It is spoken of raising of a dead man

Ioh. 5. 25.

from

from the grave of ſin. Firſt, there is the voyce of Chriſt to the ſoul, before there can bee an Eccho again of that ſoule to Chriſt; and ſo the power of the promiſe muſt firſt come to the ſoule, and wee muſt firſt heare the voice of God in the promiſe, before wee can return an Eccho back again to the Lord: The Lord muſt ſay, *Come to me*, before the ſoul can ſay, *I come, Lord*. Therefore when thou ſeeſt much deadneſſe, and dead unfitneſſe of heart in thee to the promiſe, doe not thou then leave, and give off, and ſay, Thus I am, and ſo it is with me, and ſo an end; but go to the promiſe and ſay, Whatſoever frailties I find in my ſelfe, yet I will look to the Lord, and to his promiſe; for if I want faith, the promiſe muſt ſettle me, and I muſt not bring faith to the promiſe, but receive faith from it to believe; and therefore I will wait upon God till he pleaſe to work it. Thus for the third Rule.

And now in the laſt place, and laſtly, labour to ſubmit to the moſt equall condition of the promiſe, not 4. *Means.*

making more conditions there then God hath made. Now the promise requires no more of a man, but that hee come and lay hold on mercy; therefore doe thou require no more. There is enough in the promise to doe thee good; therefore doe thou expect all good from it, and bee content there to take of God whatsoever hee hath therein offered to thy Faith. *Buy without money,* saith the Prophet: This is the condition that God offers mercy upon; buy Wine and Milk, that is, Grace and Salvation without Money, that is, without any sufficiency of your own. If a man should go running up and down to borrow money before hee comes to buy, hee may famish before hee can come: So the Lord offering Christs mercy and Salvation without our cost, and saying, Come take it without money; and yet wee will runne up and down to borrow money of our *prayers* and other *duties*; also, and from our *prayer against corruption*, we may be starved Spiritually before wee can buy at that hand. If we

Isai. 55. 12.

go

go this way to work, we may quickly loſe our labour, and our ſelves. And therefore make Gods commodities no dearer then God himſelfe makes them. Many a poor ſoul not remembring this, is kept from coming to the promiſe: For, Oh, ſaith one; If I were able to maſter my ſins and diſtempers as ſuch a one can do, then I might with boldneſſe believe. But this is to bring money: but art thou not content to have Chriſt of free coſt, ſo as he may have thee, and rule in thee, and ſupply what is wanting to thee, and open thy ſores, and heal thy corruptions? Then why goeſt thou not to the promiſe with an empty heart, that the Lord may ſupply thee, and maſter all thy riſings, and make thee a clean heart? But that muſt come afterwards, as the Lord ſaith; *When I paſſed by thee, and ſaw thee in thy blood, and behold the time was as the time of love, and I ſpread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedneſſe; yea I entred into a Covenant with thee, and thou becam'ſt mine* (that is, thou waſt

content that God should marry thee in all thy raggs) *then I washed thee with water, yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and anoynted thee with oyl, I cloathed thee also with broidered worke.* Here we see, that Christ first marrieth the Church to himselfe, and then give grace, and passeth over his estate to his Spouse: And now, were it not a wonderfull great folly, if some great King should make love to a poor Milk-maid, and she should put it off, and refuse the match till she were a QUEEN, where if she will match with the King, she may be sure to be made a Queen presently. But this comes after, and not before the mariage. So we must not look for sanctification the first day, nor till we come to the Lord in our Christian Vocation. For this is all the Lord requires of us, namely, to see our sinnes, to be weary of them, to be content that the Lord Jesus shall reveal unto us what is amiss, and seal a pardon for it, and take it away; and (further) give us his grace to take down the old

old building, and to set up a new one in us after his image: For then the Lord will bring us to himselfe; and into the wedding-chamber; and then through his great mercy, all our corruption shall fall to the ground. And when the Lord hath brought thy unfaithfull heart to believe; then labour to husband this grace well, and to improve it for thy best good, and live by it: It is a marvellous great shame to see those that are born to fair meanes, I meane the poor Saints of God that have a right and title to grace and Christ, yet live at such an under rate: I would have thee live above the world, though thou hast not a coat to cover thee, nor a house to put thy head in; yet if thou hast faith, thou art a rich man; therefore husband thy estate well. It's a shame to see some live, and husband not that estate they have; they live as if they had it not, so full of want, full of care, so full of pride, so weak, and unable to master their sinnes, whereas the fault is not in the power of faith, nor the promise, nor in

the Lord; for God doth not grudge his people of comfort, but would have his people live cheerfully and have ſtrong conſultations and mighty aſſurances of his love; and therefore the Text ſaith, *Rejoyce in the Lord alwayes, and again, I ſay, rejoyce.* And ſo, *Heb.* 6. 18. *God hath ſworn that, by two immutable things, wherein its impoſſible for God to lie, we might have ſtrong conſolrtions*: Nay, the Lord rejoyceth in the proſperity of his ſervants, and therefore hath richly provided for you, that you may rejoyce; and in not ſo doing, wee offer a great deal of wrong to the Lord and his promiſes, and bring an ill report upon that grace and mercy of his: And wee hereby alſo open the mouthes of the wicked, and make them ſay, Oh, theſe preciſe people talk of quiet and contentment, and joy in the holy Ghoſt! There is great talking of theſe things, but we could never ſet it yet. O brethren, its a great ſhame; are the riches and revenues of faith ſo great, that a Chriſtian may live like a man all his dayes?

Let

Let all the Drunkards and malicious wretches against God, laugh and bee merry; yet they cannot see one of those dayes that a poore Saint can; yea though he lay in prison all his life long, *Mat.* 17. 20. *If a man had but faith as a grain of Mustard seed, and shall say to this Mountain, Go hence, it shall be done.* Whether this be spoken of justifying faith or no, I will not now dispute; but this I am sure of, *Resist the Devil, and hee will flie from you*; and you may trample under all your lusts and corruptions: This is the life of faith, and this life wee may live, this life we ought to live. If a Tradesman have a faire stock and quick returnes, if hee goes downe the winde, and begin to decline and decay; every man will say, He was left marvellous well, but either hee knew not how to use it, wanting skill; or else attended not on it, wanting care: Another man would have lived bravely upon halfe of that meanes which hee had: So there is never a poor Christian, which trades in a Christian course, but he

hath a faire Estate, and may live like a Man. One promise is enough to make a man live comfortably all his dayes, though hee were in never so much want: But if hee be cast behinde hand, and goes downe the winde with comfort and joy; and sinkes because of his pride, and distempers, and vexation: the fault is not in the estate, for the Lord left him very well; he had a childs portion, had he had an heart to feare God and love him; as *David* saith, *Oh be mercifull unto me, as thou vsest to doe, unto those that love and fear thy Name*: The fault was not in the promise, that they could not, nor in his faith that it would not help him: but hee let the promises lie by; they came into the table, but he never cast them up, nor husbanded them aright: He had a world of consolations, that would have given a man liberty in prison, honour in shame and disgrace, and comfort in time of distress; but he did not husband them: and therefore he advised to do as the tradesman doth; hee will not spend

of

of his ſtock, but live of his trading; or I would have every Chriſtian live of his faith. Whatever ſtrength thou needeſt, fetch it from grace in Chriſt; and whatever comfort thou wanteſt, fetch it from Chriſt; but live by faith, and make a good living of it too; and then thou haſt improved the promiſe aright: bring but an empty beleeving heart with thee, and the oyl will never fail, and the meal in the Barrel will never decay, but continually ſupply thee as it did that poore widow.

Obj ct. But how ſhall a man bee trained, that he get this skil of living by faith? Every man hath his ſhifts and tricks, and lives by his own devices; and the Devil hath enough of them in the world that live this life, but the beſt life of all is little look'd af-e?

Now for an anſwer, know thus much; That there are three particulars for the training up the heart to learn this skill of living by faith.

1. Firſt, wee muſt labour to get matter for our faith to work upon.

2. We

2. We must labour to fit faith for the work.

3. Wee must labour to order our faith aright in the work.

First, wee must provide matter for our faith to work upon: For this wee see ordinarily, if a Workman want matter to work upon, either a Carpenter or the like, he must needs cease his work, and hee can go no further. And if a mans work fails, how can he provide for his famiiy? This is the complaint of poor people now adays, that they have no work; so it is in a Christians course; many poor Christians that are newly set up, and are not aforehand in the World, they want even matter for their faith, I meane, some are Ignorant and cannot read, and som have not means of a preaching Ministry; others have but small parts and cannot heare, and little doe they retain of what they do hear. The promises of God not understood, nor remembred, nor rightly applyed, they live marvellously poor, when they might live very comfortably in the World.

Now

Now the matter of our faith, is the whole Word of God; as it is with the Bee in gathering honey: as the Spider gathers poyſon out of every flower; ſo the Bee gathers honey out of the ſame flower, and out of the ſweeteſt flower ſhee ſucks the moſt honey. Oh the Word of God, how full of ſweet flowers is it! There is the ſharpeſt terrors, and the fearfulleſt plagues too: A gracious heart will gather ſweetneſſe out of both theſe. But above all, the ſweet of the promiſes of the Goſpell, the ſap and ſweet therein and the Blood of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt that is communicated thereby. Oh the faithful ſoule ſucks moſt there. Now that wee may provide matter for our faith, obſerve theſe rules, which are commonly obſerved in all proviſions.

Firſt, They provide and lay in, in ſeaſon, timely, as ſoon as they can: this is the practice of him that would husband his eſtate wiſely; his care is to buy at the beſt hand: So I would have a good Chriſtian to ſtore

ſtore up all the promiſes of God, in all the good Word of Gods ſeaſonable; I mean when all thy parts and abilities are ſtrong, and nature is able to fight it out; and while the faire day of Gods favour laſteth, and while the Word & Sacraments are diſpenſed; this is the beſt time to lay in Spiritual proviſions, that wee may not want them, when we have uſe of them It is a marveilons ſtrange and prepoſterous courſe, when a man is weak, his eyes dimme, and his heart and ſtrenghth faileth, and even ready to give up the ghoſt, then to lay in grace and proviſion of mercy: and then for him who hath hated the Miniſters, and loathed the means of grace, and abuſed the patience and long ſuffering of God: Oh then to have a Miniſter come to him, and haue a promiſe in the day of perſecution; then for a man to bethink himſelfe of the promiſe and comforts of the Goſpel; when a man ſhould ſpend on the promiſes, then to be getting of them; this is ill husbandry: The better way is this, to bee buying and

get-

getting in at every turn: and this is the reason why our Saviour saith, *Oh if thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!* While the Word, and thy Life, and the Sabbaths, and the Ordinances last; this is thy day, wee know not how soon the Lord may take all from us. Oh the estate of the poor *Palatinates*, if it be true we heare of them, they have lost all the meanes of Grace, and they have Idolatry now amongst them, and their enemies force them to go to Masse against their consciences; and they cannot see a good Minister, nor a good Christian, but they weepe to consider the times they once had: Therefore let's labour to bee wise in the Lord, now while the fair is; and consider how God deales with his Children: *Psalme* 48. 9. *We have thought of thy Name, O Lord in the midst of the Temple.* It is spoken there of the goodnesse of God towards *Sion*: A cup of poyson, and a stone of stumbling: when he had spoken of all the Bulwarks that God had

had made, and all the goodneſſe and mercy hee had ſhewed to his people, and the malice and wrath of his enemies: Hee ſaith, This God is our God, even for ever: as if he had ſaid, The Lord did provide for his people in *Egypt*, and overthrow proud *Pharoah* that ſet himſelfe againſt God; and this is our God. When thou art in the Wilderneſſe, this God is thy God; when thou art in perſecution, this God is thy God, and the God of all: thus he ſtores up while the ſeaſon laſts.

2. Note this, as thou muſt obſerve what God doth to others, ſo labour to treaſure up thy own experiences, 1 *Tim.* 4.18. Hee hath delivered us, and hee doth and will deliver us, ſaith the Apoſtle: and the Prophet *David* ſaith, *I remember thy judgment of old.* Oh well fare a good old ſtore! I remember, ſaith he, how thou didſt rebuke *Amalek* and overthrow *Nimrod*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*, and *Achitophel*. Oh its admirable to conſider theſe things! I received comfort, ſaith he; God will overthrow

throw every enemy, and this is ſtore for thy faith to work upon, *Pſal.* 89. 49. *Where are thy former mercies?* *David* is aforehand with God now; he is not come to buy food juſt at the time of famine, but its laid up beforehand; Lay in abundantly of all the promiſes of all kinds, you had better leave then lack; and its the wiſdome of a man to have ſomewhat to ſpare, and to have an overplus aforehand, that a man may not live feebly, and poorly, and be at his wits end every turne, and knowes not which way to ſhift for himſelf, and have no bread in his houſe; I mean, no proviſion of promiſes by him: *Iſaiah* 42. 23. *Who is wiſe, let him hear for after times*; As if hee had ſaid, You muſt not noly lay in promiſes for the preſent, but ſtore them for afterwards; as the Chapman ſaith, I ſhall want this at ſuch a time; and ſo the husbandman ſaith, I ſhall have occaſion for this or that at ſuch a time, and ſo get it aforehand. Oh that God would give us theſe hearts! It is good, as we may ſo ſay, to keep pro-

promises in pickle, that we may spend them at leasure. *In the dayes of famine,* saith the Prophet, *thou shalt have enough.* These precious promises will bee good meat in Lent, when haply thou shalt sit under a hollow tree, and creep among the Bushes; then three or four of these promises wil give a man a good meal of comfort; therefore store them up, they will doe you no harm: and when you are driven from house, and home, and friends, and all, these will exceedingly refresh Oh how sweetly are they scattered up and down in the World, according to the Saints severall necessities and occasions. Bring this precious provision home, leave it not in the Market; its a folly to say, I have good provision, but it is not here, *Let the Word of God dwell plenteously in you, and richly in all wisdome.* Observe, It must be plenty, not scant; it must dwell in you, that you may but step aside and have it; there is the matter for your faith to work on. So also in the next place, wee are to fit faith for

for the ſervice, that it may ſucceed with more comfort and better ſpeed. Though a man be a believer, yet there is a great deal of dulneſſe and bluntneſſe comes upon this grace, though hee have it: *Luke* 24. 25. See how our Saviour chides his Diſciples, *Oh fools, ſlow and dull of heart to believe, &c.* So wee ought to whet our faith, that it may line and ſquare the promiſes (as it is in the Hebrew) that it may pierce through the veil of all the riches of the freeneſſe of Gods grace, and ſo bring comfort to us: It's with the hand of faith, as it is with the hand of the body, if it be nummed, ſtiffe, or frozen, a man muſt rub it or warm it before he can hold any thing; ſo it is with the hand of faith, for faith is the hand of the ſoul, it takes hold of that mercy which God hath provided for us in Chriſt Jeſus. Now faith is ſometimes nummed, and ſtiffe through careleſſeneſs and looſeneſſe; therefore it's not enough for a man to have faith, but he muſt ſupple and oyl the ſinews of faith, that hee may more freely

freely take hold of the promises of life, and receive comfort from thence; and that this may be done, me must, first maintain the evidence of faith once gotten; without question undeniable, this grace of faith once gotten, is to be maintained: Mark it, I speak not of those that have not faith; it is in vain to bid a man live by faith who hath none: but its for those in whose hearts God hash been pleased to work this blessed grace: This must be the care of those that have gotten faith: hee must know the nature of faith in general, and of his faith in particular, whether it bee of that faith which *Peter* speaks of; for there is a great deal of Copper-faith in the World: As, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and the like: Now when thou hast gained evidence that thou hast faith, then fill it up, and keep it by thee, and labour to make the demonstration of it so plain to thy soul, that it may be undeniable. What a great folly is it for a man to question, when hee should

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uſe it? The work muſt needs bee much hindred, though he have never ſo much faith, when hee begins to cavil with it, and to queſtion whether it be good or no: It's a proverbial ſpeech, He that doubts of his way miſſeth his way; for while hee is doubting, hee goes no way in concluſion; ſo hee that queſtions whether hee hath faith or no, gets little good at preſent by it, tell a poor ſinner of living by faith, and he ſaith, its good newes if hee had it: 'Tis poor comfort to bid a man go warm him when hee hath no fire; ſo its poore comfort to bid a man live by that which he never had; quarrelling and doubting when a man hath it, hinders the uſe and benefit of Faith: Here is a man that is quarrelling about it, when hee ſhould live on it: when the Diſciples ſaw Jeſus walking on the Seas, they thought it was a Spirit, but Jeſus ſaid unto them *Be of good comfort, it is I:* Now when *Peter* knew it was Chriſt, being ſomewhat too ventrous; hee ſaid, *If it bee thou Lord, bid me come unto thee*

thee on the water; and Christ said *Come*, and *Peter* going, the water began to be boistrous, his heart began to sink, *&c.* and Christ said unto him, *Oh thou of little faith, why dost thou doubt?* as if he had said, its now no time of doubting, but a time of believing: The Lord bid him come, and he had ground enough to come, and strength of Faith to come; but when he saw the Waves great and troublesome, instead of believing, he fell a questioning and quarrelling with the promise: As it is with a foul rusty musket, shoot such a one off, and it will recoill. When Faith grows rusty with doubting, wee sit down dismay'd and unsetled; the very questioning and quarrelling against the work of Faith, many times doth as much dilable a man to put forth the power of Faith, as if he had no Faith at all.

Secondly, when thou hast maintained the clearnesse of the work of grace before gained, then labour to bring thy heart to marvellous stilnesse and calmnesse from time to time.

Stay-

Stayednesse and stilnesse of the soul, frames the heart to hold the shield steadily, and bear off the blow comfortably when it comes; those boistrous affections, those crowds and troops of troublesome imaginations, as feare and jealousies; these unrank the frame of the soul, that it is not at the command of Faith: as it is in an Army. when ranks and files are broken, they are at a rout, bee the Commander never so skilfull, hee cannot in that condition march on: So though wee had never so victorious a Faith, yet if the soul were hurled up and down with those boistrous distempers, the soul could not command Faith. When it was told the Disciples, *Luke* 24. 41. that Christ was risen from the dead, and had manifested himselfe to them; the Text saith, *they believed not and wondered*: they would not believe for a while, and it was through the violence of their joy; which made them they had no leisure to believe. As its true of moderate affection, so its true of strong fear, and care, and distempers

ſtempers becauſe theſe hurry the ſoul violently, and tranſport it ſo, that he cannot believe: As it is in a road, the traveller is fitted to goe his journey, but hee is hindred becauſe the crowd is ſo great and ſtrong, that they croſs him, and oppoſe him, and are ready to carry him another way againſt his will; juſt ſo it is with a ſoul thus troubled with tumultuous thoughts, eſpecially melancholly, and thoſe other enemies of the ſoul, as vain imaginations, ſinfull feares, ſinfull ſorrow, diſtempered thoughts and cares; that though the heart is willing and able to believe, yet thoſe ſtirrings of boiſterous affections, they croſſe Faith in the way, and beare it down: there *David* chides his heart in *Pſalme* 43.5. Even rocks us aſleep, and would bring it quiet, ſaying, *Why art thou ſo diſquieted, Oh my ſoul, why art thou diſquieted within me?* There are three things fit our purpoſe in this text.

1. That a tumultuous diſtemper of heart makes a man lie flat upon his back, and ſink into a ſwound.

2. It

2. It hinders the work of faith, mark what follows: *Still trust in God*: As if he had said, Leave those distempers of heart, and rest upon the freeness of Gods grace.

3. *David* yet looks up to God for mercy: *For hee is yet my God.* The virtue of this Rule wee finde by experience; especially in melancholly persons, when they have swarmes of thoughts buzzing in their mindes; sometimes restlesse feares, that doe chase their hearts, as the hound does the Deer in the Forrest; and after this comes another affection, and after that another; and so at last they come all together: Sometimes the horrour of a mans conscience makes hue and cry after him, and makes him say, Oh how my heart smites me! methought I saw Hell gaping for me, and the Devill even standing at my Elbow, ready to carry mee down to everlasting destruction: this makes his soule to have such an amazement and gastlinesse of spirit, that he cannot reach the promise of God. Well, take the Lords advice

by the Prophet: *Feare not*, but *stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord:* that is, lay aside those restlesse imaginations, and those crowds of foolish conceits; stand still, and be quiet, and with the eye of faith behold the salvation of God.

A third Rule. How faith may be fitted for the work, take notice of this. In the want of any meanes, do not *first* seeke for them; and in the presence of any meanes God affords, look not *first* to them for succour and supply, but *first* go to the promise, that it may supply what you need, and that the promise may bless what meanes you have. It is an uncomfortable and disorderly course, for a man barely and firstly to look at those things which are within the compasse of Sense, and so range up and down in the use of the meanes, when the promise and Christ are the last thought of in our hearts. As for instance. In a time of poverty, how doth the soul unfit it selfe for the promise? When a man sees his estate low, and hee is like to come to mi-

sery,

ſery, he ſaith, I have ſome good friends that will not ſee me want, I have ſo much meanes left yet, and I have my health and ſtrength, and I hope to get a poor living. Not one word all this while of a promiſe: But what ſay you to this? If death take away all thy friends, ſiekneſſe take away thy health and ſtrength, fire or theeves take away all thy goods, whether wilt thou now go? When then at a dead lift, as we commonly ſay, hee is fain to go to that mercy which *endureth for ever.* Oh friend, are you there now? Why came you not thither at firſt? Well, ſince thou art come, reaſon thus: I am like to be poor, and my friends may dye, and theeves may robbe me of all my goods: but the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. So a Miniſter, that is faithful, deſires to preach fruitfully, and to the benefit of the Congregation; and then we catch at the helps that are near at hand, and wee go to our Books and Studies, our wits and paines, aud think theſe will do the deed. We doe well

in all this; but the fault is in the order of doing them. Haply God knocks off mans wheeles, and a man is not able to come to the bottome of the point; and if he be able to compasse the truth in some measure, yet God blasts all he doth, and there is no good comes to the soules of his people; at last he is fain to go to the promise; and then the poor Minister saith, Lord, thou hast said thou wilt be with thy faithful Ministers *to the end of the World*: Little strength there is in us; but bee thou with us, Lord: now the work goes on again. The Tradesman is honest and painfull, and hee hopes to compasse a good estate by his Calling, his stock is good and great, and his skil is sufficient, and his penyworth shall be as reasonable as any others, and his acquaintance are many: Then God blasts all these, and then hee comes to the promise, as in *Psalm* 1. 3. *Whatsoever the righteous doth it shall prosper.* Hold here now, and say, I expect all from the promise, mercy and succour from the promise,

miſe. This was the courſe that *Jacob* took, *Gen.* 32 9. firſt he wreſtled with God and overcame him; then he wreſtled with his brother *Eſau*, and ſaid, *O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Iſaac*, which ſaidſt unto me, *Returne into thine own Country, and I will do thee good; I am not worthy the leaſt of all thy mercies: Lord, deliver me from the hand of my Brother Eſau, for I fear him.* Thus he wreſtled with the Lord by vertue of a promiſe, overcame him, and then overcame his brother *Eſau*, Hebrewes the 13. 4. 5. *Mariage is honourable among all men, and the bed undefiled: but Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* But how will you have helpe againſt this covetouſneſs? A man would have ſaid thus: You have got a good portion, and but little charge, and many friends: but this courſe God takes: for he ſaith, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee.* And thus when I have chaſed away Doubting, then faith is ready, and the Shield is ſcoured.

Now for the ordering of faith in the work, there are two things to be attended to.

1. How the ſoul ſhould get to the promiſes.

2. How the ſoul ſhould take, receive and improve this ſufficiency and excellency that is in God.

1. How the ſoul ſhould get to the promiſe: You ſee all is ready, the way open, and faith is fitted. There are three Rules to be obſerved, how the ſoul may get to the promiſe.

1. Throw off all power and ability in thy ſelfe. *Nevertheleſſe*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me*: It is not I that live by any power of my ſelfe, but Chriſt liveth in me. It was Chriſts quickning, reviving, and enabling, though he had faith. I *know*, ſath the Prophet, *Ier.* 10. 23. *that the way of man is not himſelfe, neither is it in man to direct his owne ſteps.* So doe thou ſay, if ever thou wouldſt have thy heart fitted to go to the promiſe. Say, It is not here, Lord, it is not in this vaine minde, it is not in the pow-

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er of this dead heart, or any passage that ever I received, whereby I am able to believe in thee. I mean the principle of life is not here, the root of faith is in the promise, and from thence it comes into the soul. As it is with a Mariner, when the Ship is upon the ground in the ebbe and low water, hee doth not expect to ting his Shippe to the shore by any power of himself: So, It is not in my wisdome that can direct me, and it is not in my weapon that can defend; it is not this humility that can bring my soul down: It is not here, it is not I, Lord, that can rest, or go to a promise; even all our abilities are at a low ebbe: All that wee are, or can doe, is to empty our selves, and fit our selves, and get up the maine mast; that is, let the soul be ready for a promise, and by virtue of that be carried heaven-ward, and Christ-ward. Take notice of this in your own soules, that the heart would begin at home: If a temptation come, the heart of it selfe would overcome it; and if a duty to be done, the heart

of it selfe would perform it: and if opposition come, the heart of it self would resist it. O remember that a man offers an injury against Reason, Sense and Religion, and all. Now thy faith beginnes to wrestle with him and his dealing; and conscience checks, and thou wilt teare thy own heart out of thy own bosome. Brethren, this will not doe it: when a shippe of an hundred Tunne is upon ground, the Mariners may pull and tug their hearts out, ere they make her go. Oh go then and say, It is not I that can be patient, and put up a wrong, be quiet, expect it not from hence. Let the heart lie still, till the wind and tyde, and promise come, and that will carry thee.

The Second Rule, Bring the promise home to thy heart, that the promise may bring thy heart to it: and thus I would have you reason: The Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of his Spirit, is in the promise undeniably, and undoubtedly, and unspeakably accompanying in his manner, as he shall see fit. This I say

I say, That the Almighty power of Christ doth really and continually accompany the promise for the good of his: Hence it is called *The spirit of promise*; for there is an Almighty creating worke goes along with the promise. And I reason thus; that Word that discernes the thoughts of the hearts of men, that Word must needs have the Almighty Work of Gods Spirit accompanying of it: so farre as God hath promised it, not when thou haply thinkst it fit, but when God sees it fit. He doth it as a voluntary workman, therefore thou considerest that there is an Almighty power, and a fulnesse in the promise. Then lay that promise upon thy owne heart, and conclude it, and look for vertue from thence, to draw thy soul to it again.

I have severall passages to expresse this more fully. *Jacob* would not believe that *Joseph* was alive, or if hee were alive; hee had but little meanes, and was poor, *Gen.* 45 26. 27, 28, 29. *But when hee saw the chariots that Joseph had sent him, then*

he believed and said, I have enough; Joseph my Son liveth. The Chariots sent from *Joseph* to *Jacob*, brought *Jacob* to *Joseph*. So every believing soul is poore and feeble, and disabled to go to God, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: therefore look thou unto the Chariots of *Israel* first, and that will convey thee to the promise; As it is with the Miller; first he pares the Mill fitly, and orders all the occasions thereof, and when the stones are fit, and laid to go, yet it will not, till the sluce be pulled up, and the water runne that drives the Mill: So the soul is humbled, and lies levell with the Lord and his Truth, and is content to yeeld to his conditions; but now the soule of it selfe, in it selfe, cannot go, it hath not the principle of going; but let down the sluce of the promise, and let that come to thy heart, and it will bring thy soul home to the Lord; as *Luk.* 19 9. *This day salvation is come to thy house*: Not to the walls of thy house, but to men that are in thy house. They did not come to salvation. But

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ſalvation came to them. The Lord ſent ſalvation to ſalute the houſe of little *Zacheus*.

The third Rule. When the promiſe is thus come home to thee, and thou ſeeſt the ſufficiency and authority of it, then all thou haſt to doe is this; In the ſtream of that promiſe, be carried home to the promiſe. The Prodigal, *Luk.* 15. is ſaid to be like a *loſt ſheep* (Mark this, for it concerns you, poor creatures.) The poor ſheepe is wandering up and downe, now in the mouth of the Lyon, and then in the bryers, and ſometimes in the pit. The Text ſaith, *He leaveth ninety nine to ſeeke that.* That is, in compariſon of what care he expreſſeth to the loſt ſheep; he leaveth a man regenerate not carelesly, but he will not expreſſe ſo great love as to a poor loſt man: And though thou canſt not finde the way to heaven, yet he will finde it thee; lie thou upon the ſhoulders of Chriſt. When thou findeſt thy heart feeble and weak, and thy ſelfe unable to believe, then the Lord Jeſus Chriſt brings the

Spirit

Spirit of grace, and that comes to ſeek, and Jeſus Chriſt layes that ſoul of thine upon his ſhoulders, that is, upon the riches of the freeneſſe of his grace: Therefore let thy heart bee tranſported by the power of that grace, and by the virtue of that mercy that God hath made known to thee for thy everlaſting good. When the Chariots are come, get up into them. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt is gone up to heaven, and hath ſent theſe chariots for thee; therefore get thee up, and ſay, Lord, take me up with thee. When the Mariner hath Sea-room enough, hee cares for no man, if he can but obſerve the channel; he looks not ſo much at his oar, or any thing, ſo that he can but obſerve the channel. This channel is the full tyde of promiſe; therefore lay thy ſelfe upon the promiſe, and ſay, Lord, in the vertue of that grace, and in the power of that Spirit, carry me, and in the riches of that mercy of thine, Lord convey the heart of this poor ſinner, and make me happy with thy ſelf for ever.

Again,

Againe, Never let a quick ſtock lie dead by you; its monſtrous ill husbandry not to bee trading with a quick ſtock. As it is in the world with temporalls, even ſo it is in our ſpirituall eſtate. Though a man have little for the preſent, yet if he have ſome old reverſion to come, it will refreſh his heart, and bear him up in time of poverty and miſery; and he ſaith, If he can make but a ſcrambling ſhift for a while, for ſo long time, then he hopes to live as well as any man in the Country: So there is ſome of the promiſes wee have in poſſeſſion. Oh, but there is the reverſion of old promiſes, old rents. As old rents of Farmes that were let long ago, when the Leaſes come out, they are worth treble the Rent they were let for at the firſt: ſo there are old rents of comfort and mercy; as *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdome prepared for you.* Then no more tears, no more trouble, no more ſorrow, no more ſin. Oh get thoſe into your hands, and have them in uſe, and ſay, The day will come when

when we shall have happinesse and joy beyond all that the tongue of man can expresse, or the heart conceive. Though we are buffeted with many temptations, and wearied with a world of corruptions, yet we shall be saved, saith Faith: Thus a man may make a pretty good shift to live upon these termes, though we have nothing else to live upon in the world. Remember what I speake now, and labour to fasten this truth upon thy heart; that there is not onely present good in thy self, but in another, and reserved by another for thy comfort, and be thou content it should be so: not only to look what thou hast, but consider that the greatest part of thy glory, is in the glory of a Christ; and the greatest part of thy wisdome, is in the wisdome of a Christ; and the greatest part of thy liberty, in the liberty of a Christ, and thy riches, in the riches of a Christ: And know, whatever is in Christ thou hast it all as thine,

* *John* 3. 12 *Behold what love the Father hath shewn to us, that wee are*

now

now *the Sonnes of God*! I tell you, brethren, this is a marvellous priviledge, and if you had no more but this, you had a childs portion; but it appeares not what wee ſhall have, wee have but a glimpſe now; what think you will the harveſt be? Now we have but the ſips of it, what ſhall then the full cuppes be, when *we ſhall ſee Chriſt as he is*? Thus did *Moſes* improve his eſtate, *Heb.* 11. 26. He bore all afflictions comfortably; yea, *Hee eſteemed the rebukes of Chriſt, greater riches then the treaſures of Egypt*; Why? *becauſe he had an eye to the recompence of the reward*. We account not of a mans eſtate for what hee hath in preſent poſſeſſion, but what is like to befall him, and that hee is born unto. What *Moſes* did, doe thou: Remember thou haſt a good ſtock upon the ground, which will pay all thy debt, and yet live like a man too. Though thou haſt many corruptions, many diſgraces caſt upon thee; though thou haſt little ſtrength, and art at great loſſe in point of comfort, yet there is enough

enough in heaven, enough in Christ, both of riches and comfort. Let thy soul then be careful to make all these present with thee for thine owne good.

But some will say, How may a man expect that from the promise, which God intends, and will undoubtedly bestow?

For answer hereunto, I will shew what thou mayest expect, and what God will undoubtedly bestow: If thou dost beleeve, Heaven and Salvation are certainly thine, and perseverance to the end, and that manner and measure of assistance, that may make thee fit for perseverance: These three things grow here. But for temporall blessings which we desire, and that measure of spirituall blessings which wee must have; so much grace, and so much assistance, and so much abilities to doe duties; God doth not engage himselfe to bestow these. But that which God engageth himselfe to bestow, both for temporal and spirituall blessings, it may be discovered in these three

three particulars. So much grace and assurance of Gods love, and so much comfort in grace as hee sees fit for thee, after his own order, and in his own time, I will open them all, because many doe here bungle wonderfully.

First, He will bestow them in his own order, not thy order. First, He will make thee fit, and make thee good, that thou mayest be able to digest them, and then hee will bestow them on thee. Haply a poor man is driven to desperate hazard, and is brought miserably under, and therefore the heart crys earnestly for some more supply; and he calls, and God answers not; and he labours to look up to the promise, where God saith, *Nothing shall be wanting to his*, & yet it cometh not. I say, God will give these in his own order. First, God will make thee fit for this estate, and then give it. I never knew a good man desperately poor, but his heart was desperately proud; therefore the Lord will make him good, and make his proud heart yeeld, and then be-

bestow these things: Look for that first, and then for the other.

Again, another Christian labours exceedingly for the assurance of Gods love, and cannot obtain it, and seeks to God in the use of the promises, and yet he cannot find it settled. Well, God will give thee comfort and consolation, but in his owne time. And know this, that commonly the Lord never debars the soul of comfort, but he sees the heart is not fit for it. Thy heart would bee proud and careless, and God would hear no more of thee, and thy sayl would overturn the boat; therefore when God hath abased thy heart, and made thee content to want what hee shall deny, then hee will give thee assurance, but it must be in his order. And this is the reason why the most smoak out their dayes in discontent; the reason is, There is a proud heart and a sturdy disposition of spirit that will not come unto Gods terms. As it is with a Physitian; he will not give a Cordial to his Patient, when he will: for if he were in a burning

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Fever, it were the next way to send him going: but first he purges him, and makes him fit, and then gives him a Cordiall: So it is in these things which thou craveſt, the Lord will give thee them, when thou ſhalt not ſurfet of comfort; and aſſurance, and proſperity; and when thy heart is emptied and purged, and able to digeſt theſe things, then the Lord will give them.

Secondly, The Lord will give us temporall bleſſings, and that meaſure of ſpirituall, in his own due time; not when thou and I would, but when he ſees moſt fit, as *John* 2. 3. 4. The mother of Jeſus comes to our Saviour, and ſaith, *They have no wine.* She thought ſhe had Chriſt at command: but he anſwers her, *Woman, what have I to doe with thee? mine hour is not yet come.* So it is with our ſoules; wee want comfort, and wee want ſtrength againſt our corruptions, and aſſurance, and aſſiſtance: But what have I to doe with that proud heart, ſayes our Saviour? *my* time, *is not yet come.* You would have

have it now, as they said, *Wilt thou now restore the Kingdome to Israel?* God will doe in his own time, & we must wait his leasure. This is one thing that doth necessarily accompany the Covenant of Grace, as I have shewed before. That the Lord should dispense of his Kingdome when he pleaseth, and not when wee will. When the Lord sees these blessings of spiritual mercies and temporall favours are ripe, and most seasonable to thy necessity; then thou shalt have them: but the time is in Gods hand.

Thirdly, The Lord doth not promise in such a manner and measure, and such a peculiar thing, to give that temporall blessing, & that spiritual assistance we desire; but the Lord will doe that which hee knows most fit: for so the Text saies, *Feed me with food convenient for me.* There was Faith now; he wholly referres himselfe to God. When a man comes to the Taylor to have a Garment made, he doth not cut out the Garment himselfe, but referres it to the judg-

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ment of the Workman. So muſt we doe, refer our ſelves to God, and know, God promiſeth nothing, but as hee ſees it fit for thy good. It may bee thou ſhalt not have this bleſſing, or that grace. As it is with a Potter, he is minded to make ſo many veſſels of honour: ſo if the Lord will make thee a veſſel of honour, go away contented; whether thou haſt ſo much proſperity, and ſo much good, or no, and ſo much grace, it skils not; it is enough that thou art elected to eternal happineſs.

Now you ſee how to manage and improve the promiſe aright for your beſt advantage, and to expect that from the promiſe which it will yeeld.

Again, Another particular in this third Rule of living by Faith, is this: How to take, and how to enjoy the ſap and ſweet of the promiſe, and to live by it. When the Husbandman hath ſovvn his ground, and his fruit is ripe, and hee hath reaped it, then hee muſt gather in his corn that hee may live upon it. So let us ga-

gather in the promises when we see the best advantage; now let us take the gain, and live by it, and that comfortably too, in the proof of Gods goodnesse therein. For this end, let me suggest these five Directions.

First, thou seest what God is in the promise; and thou expectest no more then God is there. Then, eye that particular good in the promise which thou standest in need of; eye that good in Christ, and in the promise, and then set Gods power and Faithfulnesse a work to bring that good, and his Wisdome to continue it. As for instance: I am in persecution, and either I would have deliverance and safety, that I might not bee imprisoned, or else comfort and refreshment, if the Lord carry me thither; and therefore I would see all this in the promise, still reserving the conditions before mentioned. If thou art in prison, eye liberty and preservation in Christ, he that is the great Deliverer of his people, and carryeth his people in his owne hands: And then set Gods power and

and faithfulneſſe a work, that can do it; and his wiſdom, that can continue it for thy good. That which thou ſeeſt and needeſt in the promiſe, that the Power and Wiſdome of God may communicate to thy ſoul. This is the meaning of that place, *Pſal.* 37. 5. *Commit thy wayes unto the Lord; truſt in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſſe.* Root thy ſelfe, and lay all thy occaſions upon the Lord: Therefore the Apoſtle ſaith, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. *Hurl your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you.* It is Gods proper office and work: he careth for thy ſoul, therefore lay it all upon him, and put over all thy care into his hands, and ſet his power and faithfulneſſe a work; onely this is here a little to be ſcanned. I ſpeak not this, that we ſhould take no care at all, but I ſay, Hang all the weight and burden upon the Lord. The Brewer hee tumbles the Barrel of Beer and he rouls it but it's the earth that bears it: So whatever trouble is in thine eye, or ear, or heart, roul it upon the Lord. That is thus: The weight of

of a man lies especially in three things, which a man must hurl off himselfe, and lay upon the Lord. Either a man shall not be able to know what he shall do, or what he is commanded: Or else, secondly, he shall not be able to doe what God commands, and hee knowes: Or else, thirdly, he shall not finde successe in what hee doth. It is not a trouble to doe what wee can, or to employ our selves as wee are able: but this is the trouble, when the heart saith, I know not what the minde of God is; or, I shall not do what I know; or, it will not succeed: or, No, it is not in power. Now leave all these with God, and meddle not with them, but put them over to the Lord, and meddle with thine owne duty, and with thine owne worke; and let God alone with his: and say thou unto the Lord, In truth, Lord, it is not in my power, it is not in my parts or work, either to compasse that wisedome, that is able to direct my selfe, or to have any power to doe all that is commanded, much

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leſſe to give good ſucceſſe. Lord, I will not meddle with that, but leave it to thy Majeſty: if thou in thy power canſt not, nor in thy faithfulneſſe and goodneſſe careſt not for thy poor helpleſſe creature, then I am content: and if thou wilt not bee faithful, then I am content to be miſerable.

And ſo alſo thou mayeſt ſuppoſe a man that hath promiſed to undertake ſome buſineſſe for a friend, and in the end it proves ſomewhat troubleſome, and therefore he wiſhes his friend to take it againe into his own hands; for it is very troubleſome: But a man will leave it to him, and ſay, He hath ingaged himſelf to do it, and he will not look after it; I will not meddle with it any more. So what end it is that is in Gods Royal Prerogative, leave it with God, and do not meddle with it, Let God now look to it; leave it to his faithfulneſſe and power to accompliſh it: ſo did *Abraham*, Rom. 14. 18, 19 20. *Abraham above hope beleeved under hope, that he ſhould bee the father of*

many Nations. *Sarahs* womb was barren, and his body dead, and yet he must have a Son: And therefore he sets Gods power a work, and faith. *v.* 21. Lord, this body is dead, and *Sarah* is barren: there is no help here: but thou art able, and thou hast ingaged thy selfe to doe it. You see hee sets Gods power to work, and puts over all the right and burthen of the care upon the Lord. And therefore says *Mordecai*, *Esther* 4. 14. *If thou hold thy peace at this time, comfort and deliverance shall come from some other place.* He was resolved that God had deliverance for his Church, and would not deny his Truth. *Salvation will come*, saith the Text. He knows not the place or the meanes: but he knows *salvation will come.* So set thou Gods power and faithfulnesse to work, and not thy owne care: Commit it to the Lord, and hurl thy care upon him, so far as concerns the burthen of it. This is the first Direction.

Secondly, by faith go to the promise again for helpe and power to wait

wait on God in that way, and to look towards God in the use of those means that he hath appointed for the attaining of that good which his power will work for thee: God will certainly work it: And so thou must meet God in the course of his providence, in the Improvement of the means hee hath appointed for thy good. Observe thou his providence, and doe thou what God requires: for otherwise we live not by faith, but tempt God, and throw away the promise and all, and deprive our selves of that good which God would bestow; wee not walking in that way which hee hath appointed. *Luke* 24. 49. when our Saviour was to go to heaven, he said, *Behold I send the promise of my Father amongst you: but tarry you in the City of Jerusalem, untill you be indued with power from above.* Christ would indue them with the Spirit; but they must tarry at *Jerusalem*, and wait for it, So I say, Wouldst thou have grace and the Spirit from above, and the wealth of the World? then walk

in that way God hath appointed: ſtay at *Jeruſalem*, and be in the way, and meet God in his providence, and then thou ſhalt receive from his power and faithfulneſſe what thou needeſt. Thou wouldſt have God bleſſe thee in thine eſtate, and yet thou wouldſt be idle and careleſſe: but this will not doe the deed: God would give the a bleſſing, but thou art not there to take it. This is the excellency of the promiſes of God; as they require conditions, before they beſtow mercies; ſo they make us able to be partakers of the conditions, and give the conditions: As for Example, *Ezek.* 36. the Lord in the former part of the Chapter promiſeth to give them many things; but how? It muſt be by Prayer, and humbling themſelves before him: he will give thee a family-bleſſing, by prayer in it; and a bleſſing in private, by prayer in private; and ſtrength againſt ſinne, and power againſt corruption: But I will bee ſought unto for all theſe, ſaith the Lord: and the Text ſaith, *Bleſſed is*

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the man that walketh in his integrity, and his children after him. Therefore walk thou in the integrity of thine heart; that's the condition of a christian in generall; or as a husband, or as a wife, or as a servant, in the particular. This the promise requires But mark this now: The same promise that requireth the conditions, will help us to perform the conditions: and the same Lord that saith, *I will be intreated and sought to for all these*; the same Lord saith, *Psal.* 10 17. *He prepareth their hearts to pray.* Go thou therefore to God to helpe thee to pray, that he may bestow his blessing upon thee, which hee hath promised, *Ezek* 26, 27. He will first give them *a new heart*, then *teach them to walke in his wayes.* So if thou wilt walk in his wayes, thou shalt have his blessings; therefore go thou by the power of faith to the promises of God for strength and grace, and in that thou must use the meanes appointed, and then expect a blessing from it in the course of his providence. Now is Gods power and

faithfulneſſe a work.

The third Direction. We muſt ſet it down, and conclude it, that God will do it; ſo ſhall we receive in the wayes of his providence whatſoever he hath promiſed to give. That is the work of faith, and that is to draw ſap and vertue from the promiſe, *Joh.* 3. 33. There by ſealing, is meant ſealing to the promiſe. This is the nature of ſealing; when a man hath drawn the Articles of agreement, and when they have ſealed, the whole matter is done. So faith muſt make the promiſe authentical, and put a ſeal to it that it is true, and ſaith, It is done in Heaven. and I am fully reſolved, and ſetledly perſwaded thereof, that I ſhall have whatever I have believed, and thou haſt promiſed, and I have uſed meanes in the wayes of thy providence. Famous is that of *Abraham*, *Gen.* 22. 5. The Lord had bidden him ſacrifice his Son, and yet had ſaid before he ſhould live: and therefore when he came to the place, he ſaid to his ſervants, *Abide you here with the Aſſes;*

Asses; for I and the child will go yonder and sacrifice, and return again to you. He thought to sacrifice him, and yet by faith he believed that he should bring *Isaac* again. So I would have a poor Saint of God beleeve and conclude. When thou findest thy comforts, like *Isaacs*, in the ashes, and thy estate helpless and hopeless, yet even then set Gods power a work, and wait upon him in the use of the meanes that he hath appointed, and there conclude it, and bring patience, power, and deliverance, and so in every kind, according to all thy necessities. Yet remember this, Expect no more from the promise, then God will give in the promise: but say, My sinnes shall be mastred one day, and these temptations shall one day be overthrown, that have so long annoyed the soul of thy servant: I have begg'd succour against these corruptions within, and these temptations without, and yet it is not; but I know its done in heaven, it wants nothing but the taking out; thou wilt bestow upon

thy ſervant what thou ſeeſt fit, 1 *Sam.* 1. 18. *Hannah* wept ſore, and prayed to the Lord, and went away, and was no more ſorrowful: and ſhe ſaid, Lord, I believe that I ſhall either have a childe, or that which is as good or better: now the buſineſs was done. But imagine the Lord delayes, and does not ſuddenly accompliſh what he intends, and thou haſt uſed meanes to receive; hee gives not, grants not, nor ſends not ſuccour according to thy deſire, and the tenure of the Covenant, as thou conceiveſt.

Then in the fourth place, faith is to take up its ſtand, and ſtay till it come: as thou reſolveſt ſo it will be: ſtay till it be, and ſtay it out. Here is much work to doe. We prevent Gods kindneſſe, when wee go away before he bee willing to beſtow a kindneſſe on us. But faith will not doe ſo: he that beleeves, does not make haſt: hee makes haſt to obey, but he ſtayes, and reſolves that it will be. *The viſion is for an appointed time*, therefore wait for it. Thou art

art pestered with thy sinnes, and hast laboured by faith to subdue them: and thy estate is low, and thou hast laboured by faith for deliverance: and yet it comes not: therefore stay till God sees fit, and it will come, *Psalm* 123. 2. *As the eyes of a servant look to the hands of his master, and the eyes of a maiden to her mistris: so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, untill he have mercy upon us.* It is not, Till I will, or till I see fit, or according to my minde: but untill the Lord have mercy. Wee suddenly slide away from the Covenant which the Lord makes with us: because wee have it not when we will, therefore we go away, 1 *Sam* 13 13. When *Samuel* tarried long, and the people began to murmur, *Saul* went and offered a burnt offering to the Lord, and therefore *Samuel* said unto him, *Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the Commandement of thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established the Kingdom upon Israel for ever.* If *Saul* had stayed the Lords time, hee would

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have eſtabliſhed the Kingdom upon *Iſrael* for ever: but he prevented the Lords kindneſſe, and offered ſacrifice unſeaſonably and ſinfully. So it is many times with a proud, pettiſh, raſh and diſtempered heart: if wee have not what we would, and when we would, then wee are all amort, and murmur, and ſay, Why ſhould wee wait any longer? Thou haſt done fooliſhly. Haſt thou prayed and looked to the promiſe thus long, and wilt thou now give over? The Lord would have comforted thee, hadſt thou gone on: but the Lord hath withdrawn himſelfe from thee, becauſe thou haſt withdrawn thy heart from the promiſe. When the carriage is heavy, and the way dead, there are many ſore pulls, and oft the Waggon is at a ſtand; and if a man ſhould then go away and give over, all his work were loſt. Therefore ſtay thou till the Lord ſhew mercy. Thus long hou haſt call'd, and ſought, and lookt up to the promiſe, and waited upon the Lord, aud attended upon the freeneſſe of his grace; once more

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haply would have done it: thy heart was almoſt humbled, thy ſinne was almoſt conquered: Oh thou ſilly ſoul, why didſt not thou hold it out? It would have come at the laſt, my life for thine. Now take heed of this; if the time ſeem tedious, and thy heart begins to ſink, and thy ſpirit is weary; take heed of flying off, take heed of ſhifting for thy owne comfort, and looking to baſe ends and aims: no, hold thy mind to, and keep thy eye of faith upon the promiſe, and ſtay it out till God ſee the the time fit: and know, its the beſt time when its Gods time. In the 17 of the *Acts* verſe 31. *Paul* ſayes, *Except theſe abide in the ſhip, ye cannot be ſafe.* Every man was skipping over-board to ſave himſelf: but *Paul* ſtayed them. A man would have thought otherwiſe; but the Apoſtle knew it was not ſo; for the Lord had revealed it to him. So I ſay, Be thy temptations never ſo ſtrong, and thy ſins never ſo many, and thou beginneſt to complain, and ſayeſt, I have cryed, Lord, and fought earneſt-

earneſtly, and yet my condition is worſe, and my ſoul more ſinful, and I am leſs able to help my ſelf; there is no more ſuccour to be expected. Now take heed of going out of the ſhip, and from the uſe of meanes: keep in the ſhip; for in it you ſhall be ſafe. Keep in the promiſe, and ſtill your hearts there: you ſhall have a happy arrival at heaven, though it be upon a little broken board: its no matter, ſtay Gods time.

The fifth Direction. Yet haply the Lord ſeems ſometimes not onely to delay his poor ſervants, and to withhold his favour; but he ſeems to frown, and ſay he will not hear; and he ſeems to be angry with the prayer of his ſervants, and with their importunity, and hee ſeemes as if hee would not ſuccour and ſupply. Thus he dealt with *Jacob*, *Geneſis* 32 26. there the Lord ſays, *Let me go*; I care not what becomes of thee, *Let me go*. But *Jacob* lays hold upon him, and would not let him go. So the laſt work of faith is this, In a holy humility labour to contend with God, and

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by ſtrong hand overcome the Lord; for the Lord love, to be overcome thus. Bee not ſaucy with the Lord; and in the ſenſe of thine own baſeneſſe, as it were, catch the Lord Jeſus, and ſtrive with him; leave not till thou haſt thoſe comforts he hath promiſed, and thou haſt begged. This is the glory and victory of the triumph of faith, that gives thee the day too, and lays down the weapons, and yeelds himſelfe conquered: As it was with *Jacob*; when God ſaw hee could not prevail, he ſaid, verſe 28. *Thy name ſhall no more be called Jacob but Iſrael, becauſe thou haſt prevailed with God.* God is ready to give what he hath promiſed: but he will have us try the maſtery with him. God overcomes himſelf, and wee by faith in God overcome God: as *James* 2. 13. *Mercy triumphs over Juſtice.* Lord, ſaith my ſoul, Why ſhould not I have that mercy, ſupply and ſuccour? Saith Juſtice, Thou art a ſinful wretch, and thou haſt wronged me, Saith Anger, Thou haſt deſerved to be plagued: and there-

therefore thou shalt feel the smart of my displeasure. Now faith lays hold upon the riches of the freenesse of Gods mercy in Christ, and in him Justice is satisfied, and Anger appeased for all; and now Mercy is purchased for all, and mercy triumpheth over Justice, and Faith takes hold upon and overcomes God himself, as I may say, with a holy humble baseneſſe of heart. You know what the Lord did to the woman of *Canaan*: when shee had striven with him a great while, and would take no denyal, at last he saith, *O Woman, great is thy faith, bee it unto thee as thou wilt*. Take what thou wilt, if thou wilt have life for thy childe, and peace for thine own conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost take it; for it is all thine. He, as it were, turnes her loose to all his treasury, If shee had gone away at the first or second denyal, she had found no help: but because she held out, she had all her hearts desire. God would have us wrestle with his Majesty, that hee may bee overcome in mercy and good-

goodneſs. I might have here taken ſome of the moſt deſperate caſes that could be, that you might have ſeen what faith would have done in the midſt of the want of all means, and in the greateſt extremity that could have befallen a poor ſinner; but I paſſe over that at this time. Now therefore conſider what hath been ſaid: lay theſe things up, and have them ever before you, and practiſe them: and by often writing, learne to write: and by often living, learn to live. Many people live poorly, and make a poor ſhift to go to heaven: but I would not have a Chriſtian live ſo, but be Maſter of his Art. Know and ſee your way, and uſe the means. Labour to get good theeby, that you may have ſap, and the ſweet of the promiſes, & ſo go ſinging, and rejoycing, and triumphing up to heaven. Now that which I conclude withal, is this. You ſee how far the Lord hath brought us, how the ſoul hath been prepared, and cut off from ſin and himſelf, if fitted for the Lord Jeſus by contrition and humiliati-

no, and that the ſoul comes to ſee that there is no hope in the creatures nor any ſuccour in Heaven, but in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo at laſt the ſinner comes & lies at the foot of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and knowes that either he muſt be another man, or a damned man: now when he ſees that prayer and all other meanes will not profit, and the power of the meanes yet prevails not, and the power of his corruptions is not yet maſtered: then he looks up to Chriſt, and is contented that he ſhould do what he wil with him. Now when the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſees him lie wearied thus with his corruptions, then the Lord gives ſpeciall notice to his ſoul, that it is his purpoſe to do him good, and that there is mercy for that broken heart of his. With that, Hope is ſtirred and faith, is it poſſible? is it credible? Shall this wretchedneſſe of mine be pardoned? Oh my deſire is kindled within me, and I long for that day. Oh that I might once ſee the Funeral of all my ſinne! Mark now, how love and joy are cheared

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to entertaine this Mercy; and saith, Oh how is the soule bound and ingaged to God, that offers free and undeserved grace to a stubborn and rebellious sinner! At last the Will saith *Amen* to the promise,& further saith, Oh that mercy I will have! And thus the soule is come home to God, by vocation. Now the Prodigal is come home to his father, and the Fathers heart leaps within his breast, when he sees him lie at the door. And as the Father rejoyceth, so the Angels in Heaven rejoyce, and all the Faithful shall rejoyce, and say, Oh my Husband, Oh my Father, Oh my child, and my Wife that was a sinfull Woman, is come home again, to her first and best Husband. You that have found it thus in your selves; be comforted: you that know it in others, rejoyce.

To sum up all briefly, we see,

First, when wee have pluckt away all carnal props, that then thers is way made for the promise to come in to us.

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Secondly, and when our hearts are possessed throughly of the sufficiency of Gods promise and grace, that then the promise that draws neer, begins its work.

Thirdly, that when we expect all from the promise, even power to come to it, that then it lays fast hold upon us.

Fourthly, that when we are content to yeild to the just conditions of the promise, then the promise carries us, and all in us.

Thus we have seen the hinderances removed, and the means propounded: and now, that we may bee moved and perswaded importunately to seek after this blessed grace of God: let us further consider thus much: namely, that if we once get this grace, wee get all other graces with it; which is a ground of much comfort, & cannot but keep us doing: For wil it not much incourage a man, when in the doing of one work, hee knows he shall do another: nāy, all his work with one labour? but so it is in the work of faith. Oh then how

should

ſhould it incourage us to labour for *faith*, ſeeing that by getting it, wee have all? Men that are wiſe to provide for themſelves, and to lay out their monies in ſome purchaſe for the beſt: when they ſee a ground well wooded and watered, but eſpecially to have ſome rich Mines in it; all their minds will be upon ſuch a place; becauſe, having it, they have all with it: So it ſhould be here, in our deſires: and as there, ſo here: get grace, and get all: ſtrengthen here, and all is ſtrong: but want here, and want every where: having this grace of faith, you need not ſeek for wiſedom; for faith will make you wiſe to ſalvation: and you need not labour for patience; for he that is faithfull, will be patient; and ſo for other graces. He that hath the grace of faith, hath them all, hath holineſſe, hath cleanneſſe, hath love, hath a pure mind, and good conſcience: and what hath hee not? The Saints of God endeavour with much paines to get grace, and to ſubdue corruption: but becauſe they take not the right

Faith to be laboured for above all graces.

right way to it, they seeke and not find.

Many a poore soule mournes and cryes to Heaven for mercy, and prays against a stubborn hard heart, and is weary of his life becaus this vile heart remaines yet in him; and yet haply gets little or no redress: the reason is, and the main wound lies here; he goes the wrong way to work; for, hee that would have grace must (first of all) get faith, faith will bring all the rest; buy the field, and the Pearl is thine; it goes with the purchase, thou must not think with thine own strugling to get the mastery of a proud heart; for that will not doe: but let thy faith go first to Christ, and try what that can doe. There are many graces necessary in this work; as, meeknesse, patience, humility and wisedome: now faith will fetch all these, and Possesse the soule of them. Brethren, therefore if you set any price upon these graces, buy the field, labour for faith; get that, and you get all. The Apostle saith, *We all with open face beholding, as in a glass,*

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the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image from glory to glory. The Lord Chriſt is the glaſs, and the glorious grace of God in Chriſt, is that glory of the Lord: therefore firſt behold this grace in Chriſt by faith (and thou muſt ſo, before thou canſt receive grace.) Firſt, ſee humility in Chriſt, and then fetch it thence: Firſt ſee ſtrength and courage in him, whereby to inable thy weak heart, and ſtrength will come; there fetch it, and there have it. Would you then have a meek gracious and humble heart; I dare ſay for ſome of you that you had rather have it then any thing under heauen, and would think it the beſt bargain that ever you made; which is the cauſe why you ſay, O that I could once ſee that day, that this proud heart of mine might bee humbled! Oh if I could ſee the laſt blood of my ſins, I ſhould then think my ſelfe happy, none more, and deſire to live no longer! But is this thy deſire, poor ſoul? then get faith, and ſo buy the whole, for they all go together: nor think

think to have them upon any price, not having faith: I meane patience, and meeknesse, and the humble heart: but buy faith the field, and you have the Pearl. Further, would you have the glory of God under eye, and be more heavenly minded? then look to it, and get it by the eye of Faith: look up to it in the face of Jesus Christ, and then you shall see it; and then hold you there: for there, and there onely, this vision of the glory of God is to bee seen, to your everlasting peace and endlesse comfort. When men use to make a purchase, they speak of all the commodities of it; as, That there is so much wood, worth so much; and so much stock, worth so much, and then they offer for the whole, answerable to these severals. So here, there is *Item* for an heavenly minde, and that's worth thousands; and *Item* for an humble heart, and that's worth millions; and so for the rest. And are those graces so much worth? what is faith worth then? Hence, wee may conclude, and say, Oh precious faith!